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WHITECROSS AND THE BENCH

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WHITECROSS AND THE BENCH

A REMINISCENCE OF THE PAST

BY THE AUTHOR OF

FIVE YEARS' PENAL SERVITUDE

There is a tide in the affairs of man
Which, taken at the *ebb*, *leads on to Whitecross*

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PREFACE.

THE FAVOUR with which my former work, showing the actualities of Prison Life in our Convict Establishments, was received, has induced me to venture again before the public, with an equally minute description of life as it used to be in the two great Debtors' Prisons of London—Whitecross and the Queen's Bench.

In the 'Pickwick Papers' and 'Little Dorrit' their author has given most amusing and graphic sketches of the Fleet and Marshalsea; but both of these are treated more in a picturesque than a matter-of-fact style, and, though I trust I may be pardoned for using such a phrase in connection with so eminent a man as Charles Dickens, they fail to bring before the reader a realistic view of either.

In 'FIVE YEARS' PENAL SERVITUDE' my objects were twofold—to make known to the world at large what life in a criminal prison really is, stripped of all its romance, and to bring to the notice of officials, and of others who

are in a position to effect alterations, some of the glaring defects in the system of prison management.

I trust I may congratulate myself on both these objects having been to a very great extent attained.

The large circulation of the book must necessarily have secured the first. There have been several alterations made in prison discipline and management since its publication; and if they are in any way the result of the remarks in its pages, it will be a satisfaction to know these were not made in vain.

Imprisonment for debt is supposed to have been abolished, and theoretically it is so; and it is as well that some record should be left to show the rising and future generations what it really was.[1] Though the old laws of arrest for debt are repealed and annulled, and a creditor cannot arrest a debtor, as in former days, for the debt itself, the inability to pay is regarded as a contempt of Court, for which contempt a man is liable to be committed by a Judge's order to prison for any period not exceeding twelve months, and in cases of small debts under the County Court the time is limited to six weeks.

An example of the working of this anomaly is given in the case of the bricklayer taken from his work and locked up in Whitecross Street Prison.

The working of the clauses of the County Court Acts, empowering the Judges to commit defaulting debtors to prison, has long been a source of controversy

[1] For Notes see Appendix.

and complaint; and if the perusal of these pages have the effect of inducing any of our legislators to give attention to their improvement, they will not have been written in vain.

It is generally admitted that the locking a man up for *debt* is about as great an absurdity as can well be committed. If a man is unfortunate and cannot pay, the shutting him up is hardly likely to facilitate his means of satisfying his creditors, but much more likely to frustrate any efforts he may make to do so, and bring ruin upon himself and family. On the other hand, if he *can* pay and *won't* pay, he is just as likely to be able to tire out the patience of his creditor as not. If a man is honest, but unfortunate, a prison is no place for him. If he is a rogue, a debtors' prison is no place for him either; but, on being proved a rogue, he should be sent to a rogues' gaol and punished as a rogue.

Doubtless there are those who will recognise many of the scenes and the characters depicted in these pages, for imagination has had but a scant share in contributing to them.

Abler pens than mine could have accomplished this task, and it may be presumption in me to have attempted it; but as no one else has taken the subject in hand I have done so, and, in submitting these pages to the public, crave the reader's indulgence on behalf of my efforts.

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WHITECROSS AND THE BENCH.

CHAPTER I.

SLOMAN'S SPONGING-HOUSE.

It was in the year before I left England, and just after my friend Robert Balfour had sailed for Sydney, that I met Charles Watson in the Piazza of Covent Garden as I was leaving the Tavistock, which I always made my head-quarters when in town; which at that time I pretty frequently visited, in order to push on the settlement with my uncle William's executors, to enable me to go out to the colony and try my good fortune in the antipodean new world. Watson, too, was raising money; but, unlike me, his uncle or aunt—I forget now which relation it was—continued to live, and Watson's possessions were still in prospective. He had no idea of leaving the country—was far too fond of the pleasures of town life and his club—and on the death of his relative would be in possession of a very fair income for an idle man of tolerably moderate desires. In the meantime he was anxious to anticipate, and was negotiating a loan on his reversion. When I met him he explained all this to me, and stated that while the loan was being carried out, he was in need of money.

"Could I help him with "half a century?"' No! Then would I give him my name—a mere matter of form—on a bill, and the men he was treating with about his reversion loan would let him have the cash for it while the investigations into title and other matters were proceeding.

Charley was a good fellow. I knew well enough he was entitled to the money, and that my risk, if all went straight with his negotiations, which I could see no possible reason to doubt, would be *nil*. We walked into the hotel, called for two brandies-and-soda, and sent the waiter for a bill-stamp, which we filled up and signed.

Later in the day we met again and dined at the Blue Posts together. We parted that evening, and I never again saw poor Watson, who died a few weeks after, through a bad fall received in hunting. The transaction faded from my memory, and when in Scotland I heard of Charley's accident and death, it never occurred to me that there was any possibility of my being called upon to meet his bill. I was unaware of the fact that his reversion to the property was contingent upon his surviving the old aunt or uncle then in possession, and never once gave it a thought. There are always delays in legal matters, except when the case in hand is against you. There were the usual delays in mine, and all manner of excuses were made by my solicitor for the non-completion of the affair. There was no delay, however, in poor Charley Watson's 300*l*. bill coming to full maturity; and one morning, on opening one of my letters, I had the pleasure of receiving a cool notice that my acceptance of the late

Mr. Charles Watson's draft for 300*l.* had been dishonoured, and lay at Messrs. Happs & Camp's, 102A Gray's Inn Chambers. The notarial charges were 1*s.* 6*d.*, and the sum of 6*s.* 8*d.* was modestly demanded for the letter containing the information. In one corner of the letter the three items were neatly and correctly added together, and amounted to 300*l.* 8*s.* 2*d.*

Having an engagement in quite a different direction to 102A Gray's Inn Chambers, and concluding in my own mind that there was a mistake in the whole affair, as of course Watson's own property would pay the amount fifty times over, I determined to defer making the personal acquaintance of Messrs. Happs & Camp for a day or two. Placing the letter in my pocket, I finished my breakfast and set out to keep my engagement.

The next day and the day after passed, and so did all recollection of Messrs. Happs & Camp's communication pass from my memory. Some three days after, on returning to my hotel, the porter informed me that a gentleman had called several times to see me, and would do so again in the morning. He had given a name which, the man said, he thought was Carter or Carteret. I knew no one of such a name, passed up stairs, and was soon in bed and sound asleep, dreaming of all I should do when once I landed on the sunny shores of New South Wales. Next morning I breakfasted sooner than usual, having arranged to be at my solicitor's at an early hour, determining in my own mind to express my opinion in plain Saxon English as to the interminable delays and difficulties which every day were brought forward, greatly to my disgust and annoyance.

Standing on the doorstep and lighting my cigar, I was addressed by a seedy-looking young fellow.

'Oh! Mr. Brett—Mr. Augustus Brett?'

'Yes, that's my name,' I replied.

'Here's a copy of a writ from Happs & Camp, and this is the original,' said the seedy man, handing me a long strip of printed paper, in which were certain blanks filled up in writing, in one of which I saw my own name. I commenced reading 'Victoria by the Grace of God,' when a voice behind me exclaimed:

'The horrid blackguard! Sure, why didn't ye kick the ugly thafe into the hape of cabbage-laves there? In County Clare when a spawn of the devil serves a gentleman with a copy of a writ, we make the beggar eat the original.'

I felt deeply annoyed that a stranger should see such a thing in my hands, though I had but a very vague notion of its purport. I crumpled up the obnoxious strip of paper and crammed it into my pocket.

'Oh, it's of no consequence,' I stammered out. 'I suppose it's a matter of form.'

'Quite sir! from one end to the other. Her Majesty's greeting, and his Lordship the Chief Baron of the Court of Exchequer's mighty polite invitation to meet him, are both alike matters of form, and precious empty ones too, for devil a welcome would one or the other give ye if ye took either at their word. It's not so much as a bite or a sup they'd offer ye when ye did call. Just put it in the first empty box ye have. I've had so many of the blaygard things in my time as would paper a room.'

With a stammered acknowledgment of his advice and a feeling of impatience and annoyance at the man's freedom, I hastened away; and being in far from an amiable frame of mind when I reached old Harrison's (my solicitor) office, I couched my complaints of his and the law's delays in such very plain and, I fear, unparliamentary Saxon English, that I caused the old fellow to lose his temper too, and to tell me that, 'but for the respect he had for my late father and my uncle John, he would decline to conduct my affairs any longer; and, in fact, if I did not think he was doing justice to them, and would prefer anyone else taking them in hand, I was at liberty to instruct another solicitor.'

This nettled me exceedingly; so merely saying, 'Very well, sir; good morning,' I took up my hat, and cramming it on my head as far and as tight as it would go, strode out of the office muttering anathemas against the legal profession in general and old William Harrison in particular.

Of course at such an interview I never mentioned one word about Watson's bill or the writ I had been served with. Indeed, I question whether either one or the other occupied one single thought in my brain.

When I had started from the Tavistock I had taken a small bundle of letters, with the intention of referring to them in the course of conversation with Mr. Harrison; but as the interview had only resulted in our quarrelling instead of consulting, of course I had not either used them or left them. Not wanting to carry the bundle with me all day, I walked back to Covent Garden to deposit them in my portmanteau; and on

arriving at the hotel I found a letter from John Morris, an old chum at Caius, saying he had a fortnight's holiday, and asking me to go down into Wales with him to his brother-in-law's, who could give us some excellent fishing. He was to start that evening. To drop a line to Morris saying, 'Yes, I'll go, and will meet you at Euston Square,' and to pack my portmanteau, occupied but a little while; and then to go to the City to see some Colonial people, through whom I was getting information and introductions in Sydney and advice generally as to proceedings when I should arrive out, took up the time till the hour drew near to meet Morris at the station.

I took but few things with me, and before starting made an entire change of dress, leaving the coat I had worn all day in a trunk at the Tavistock; and in its pocket was the document I had received in the morning, commencing with Her Majesty's greeting and Lord Denman's invitation.

We spent a glorious fortnight in one of the prettiest parts of North Wales, and had capital sport. We were both greatly taken with the new vicar's daughters; and had I not firmly made up my mind to go out to New South Wales and turn bushman for a few years, or even if I had lengthened my visit into a month, I will not say what might have happened. One thing is very certain, not once did either Charley Watson's dishonoured bill of 300*l.*, or the name of Messrs. Happs & Camp, the holders thereof, obtrude themselves upon my thoughts. Even my disagreement with Harrison had never troubled me, so entirely had I given myself up to fishing in the morning and the delights of archery

and musical parties in the afternoons and evenings, at which the fair daughters of the parson carried off all the honours.

All things in this world come to an end sooner or later—especially pleasant things—and at last the day arrived when Morris was obliged to return to town; and I, not having a shadow of excuse for staying any longer, was compelled to return too.

On arriving at the Tavistock I found several letters, and one from Messrs. Happs & Camp, stating that, unless the debt and costs were paid on or before the 14th of the month—and it was now the 18th—they would 'reluctantly be compelled to issue a "Ca. Sa."'[3] What a 'Ca. Sa.' might be I had not the very remotest idea—ignorance in my case was far from being bliss. If I had only had the slightest notion of the meaning of these two cabalistic short syllables, I most certainly should not have retired so comfortably to rest at the Tavistock Hotel.

The next morning, while dressing, I began to suspect I had better consult some one as to the meaning of 'Ca. Sa.;' and not feeling inclined to go at once to Harrison, I determined to call on a young legal friend and ask him to elucidate the mystery or apply to some one more learned in the law than himself to do so.

This determination was arrived at somewhat late—too late, in fact—for I had hardly made up my mind when I heard a knock at my door, and on calling out 'Come in!' was greatly surprised, instead of seeing one of the waiters walk in, to behold a tall, good-looking man, with another, anything but either good-looking or over-clean, standing behind him.

'Mr. Augustus Brett,' said the stranger, advancing

in a half-familiar, half-apologetic manner, and touching me gently on the shoulder, 'I have a writ of Ca. Sa. against you, at the suit of Messrs. Happs & Camp, for 326*l.* 4*s.* 10*d.*, debt and costs, and I arrest you upon it.'

'Arrest me! What the devil do you mean?'

'It's no use your showing fight, young sir,' said the ill-looking man in the rear. 'You'd best come quiet, or we'll have in the police.'

'Police! What do you mean?'

'Hold your tongue, Barney,' said the first speaker. Then turning again to me, 'You can come to Cursitor Street to a quiet lock-up, where you can see your solicitor; and if you arrange it no one need be any the wiser.'

'Do you mean that you arrest me for Mr. Watson's bill?' I asked.

'Yes, that's just it; and the best thing you can do is to come to Sloman's and send for your solicitor. He will tell you what to do.'

'Very well, I suppose I must. Just go down stairs and wait till I have finished dressing.'

'Walker!' rudely exclaimed the dirty fellow standing at the door, and drawling out the word. 'Not exactly.'

'No, sir,' said his superior, 'I cannot lose sight of you; but my man can go down stairs, and I will sit here till you have finished dressing. Go down, Barney, and wait outside,' he continued, addressing the individual so named, who left the room, closing the door carefully behind him, but looking round the room first, to see if there were any other door by which I could escape.

The Sheriff's officer—for such the man was—now

explained to me more fully that his duty was to take me to Whitecross Street Debtors' Prison; but that if I liked I could go to Mr. Sloman's house in Cursitor Street, where I could have private accommodation, and where my friends or solicitor could come and see me with greater facilities than at Whitecross Street. I packed up a few things to take with me for present use; locked up my other traps; rang for the waiter, who I saw in a moment was fully aware of what had befallen me; and, after settling my bill and leaving directions as to the safe custody of my portmanteaux, walked off with my 'guardian,' and at the door of the hotel found Mr. Barney had most considerately provided a cab, in which we all three rode off.

A few minutes' drive brought us to our destination —a most uninviting-looking, dirty house, every window of which was guarded by stout iron bars. As we alighted a young man of most unmistakable Hebrew physiognomy ascended the steps, with a pewter-pot of beer in each hand and a very suspicious-looking bottle protruding from his coat side-pocket. Saluting my conductors, he gave a shrill whistle, and before he reached a glass door at the end of a short lobby it opened and revealed another of the children of Israel, who evidently was the janitor of the place.

I paid the cabman some exorbitant fare—I forget how much; but I know it was about four times what he was entitled to—and walked into a small room at the back. Hardly had I entered and closed the door before it was reopened, and the creature named Barney came in, hat in hand, but now as servile as before he had been impertinent.

'I hope, sir, you'll be comfortable here till you get this matter arranged, sir,' he commenced. 'You can get anything you want 'ere."

'Thank you,' I replied. 'I don't require anything at present but to be left alone.' For I wanted to pull myself together and consider what was best to be done.

'I hope you will remember the assistant, sir,' said Mr. Barney in the very blandest manner he could assume. 'I made the job as agreeable as I could for you, and hope you won't forget me.'

'Not I, my man; to the last day of my life I shall remember you and the whole of this precious morning's work, I assure you.'

'I shall be obliged if you will give me a trifle, sir, for we assistants don't get very much out of a Ca. Sa.'

'I am glad to hear it,' I replied; 'the less you get the better, and the fewer of you there will be in your precious trade. Here, take that,' I added, throwing a half-crown on the table, 'and leave me alone in peace. I suppose there is a bell in the place, if I want anything?'

I looked hastily around the room as I spoke in search of a bell, but in vain. At one glance my eye took in the whole contents of the place, and such a collection of ramshackle, dirty, broken furniture I never saw before or since. Every article had years and years ago been good, but now was a complete wreck. Not two chairs were alike, and all were more or less in a state of chronic decay, either afflicted with a rickety or broken leg or back, or else the seat was so torn that the stuffing protruded.

Barney took up the half-crown from the table, the

cloth of which, once handsome, was now so *mellowed* down in tone of colour—so begrimed, in fact, with the dirt of years and the stains of innumerable beer-pots and jugs of all sizes—that the endeavour to trace out its original pattern was as good an exercise to a person's ingenuity as the unravelling of the most abstruse enigma or mesostich.

Mr. Barney seemed but scantily satisfied with my largesse, and left the room with the injured air of one who had been defrauded of his due.

I walked over to the window and looked out through its dingy panes into what appeared to be a large cage; for not only was the back-yard of the house surrounded by iron bars, but they stretched across from the top of one wall to the other, as if to prevent even the possibility of escape by a balloon.

Seated on a bench in this cage were two persons of gentlemanly appearance in eager conversation. The younger of the two was evidently excusing himself and pleading hard with the elder, who apparently was paying but little heed to his young relative's pleadings, but was in his turn endeavouring to reason with him; and by constantly referring to several papers in his hands, that had every appearance of tradesmen's bills, seemed to be expatiating on the result of a course of extravagance which had landed him in the iron cage.

I afterwards learned from the young man himself that he had been arrested at the suit of a parcel of rapacious tradesmen who had pressed their credit upon him while an undergraduate of one of our Universities. These men, after tempting their too-willing victim into all sorts of extravagances, and supplying him with

clothes and jewellery fit for a prince, and at most exorbitant prices—wines reputed to be of the finest vintages in Europe, and cigars of the finest brands—had come down suddenly upon him in a body directly he had received his commission and been gazetted to a regiment then serving in one of the colonies. These harpies not only allow but, in fact, entice in every possible way, young men at the Universities to get into debt to an extent that too frequently cripples them for life. They calculate on the relatives of their dupes coming forward to pay them, when, as in the case of the young fellow then at Sloman's, they have them firmly in their grip. This young fellow had run the usual course, unable to resist the facilities for credit that had been offered to him, not only in the form of goods, but in cash too.

These very accommodating tempters and blighters of the prospects of young men were always ready to supply their victims with ready cash in exchange for their bills and promissory notes. This mode of turning stamped paper into coin of the realm seemed to my fellow in misfortune a much more simple and pleasant mode of obtaining ready money supplies, and attended with much fewer disagreeables, than applying to 'the governor.' At last, however, the time arrived when no more renewals could be effected. The pieces of stamped paper were no longer held by the friendly and accommodating gentlemen who had entangled him in their meshes. Applications were made for payment by people in London with most unmistakably Israelitish names, who declined to renew unless another 'good name' endorsed the bill. In some cases the victim succeeds in get-

ting another friend into the same mess as himself by persuading him to add his autograph to a new bill; but in this instance the newly-gazetted young officer, seeing, when too late, his own position, was too honourable to draw anyone else into the same dilemma; and on flatly telling his creditor so, was arrested the same evening on a writ 'Ne exeat regno' and conveyed to Mr. Sloman's hotel, where I found him.[4]

He had now done what he should have done before —laid the state of his affairs before his father. And the old man had come up to London, and now in this dirty, caged back-yard in Cursitor Street was debating in his mind whether he should make the sacrifice of the money to the harpies who had done their best to ruin his only boy, and by so doing intrench deeply on what would be the portions of his girls, to say nothing of the serious reduction of income it would necessarily make at home; or whether he should allow the young man to pass through the Insolvent Court, and so rid himself of his debts—a course which would entail the loss of his commission, to obtain which so much interest had been used by old friends, and so many years had been expended.

It was a question he could not decide for himself, and so he wrote home to his boy's mother and sisters, putting the case in his own plain way to them, which, poor, deluded man, he might have saved himself the trouble of doing, had he but considered for one moment the self-sacrificing nature of womankind—mothers and loving sisters—in such cases. To see their soldier-boy in his uniform, with epaulets and sword, and the hope of some day reading his name, mentioned with distinction, in some Gazette that would be read throughout

all England with a glow of pride, had long been the most cherished dream of his mother and her daughters, each one of whom would have parted with her all and have gone out to brave the cold world as governess or companion—lady-helps were not wanted then—rather than that the British army should be deprived of one of its most illustrious leaders, for such they all implicitly believed their darling must one day become.

As might have been expected, their reply was most peremptory that 'papa' should go at once to the family solicitor and make the needful sacrifices to satisfy the cormorants and set the sucking hero free. Before returning to my own case I will just say these ladies lived to be rewarded by a partial realisation of their dreams. Years afterwards, when I was down in Sydney seeing after the shipment of my wool, I took up an English paper to read the thrilling accounts of that dreadful but glorious beating down of the Indian Mutiny, and in it I saw the name of my quondam fellow-prisoner mentioned with distinction by the Commander-in-Chief for the gallant manner in which he had led his company at the storming of one of the well-defended outposts of Lucknow.

For four-and-twenty hours after my arrest I felt almost stupefied at my position, and in consequence of the disagreeable nature—not to use a stronger term—of my last interview with Mr. Harrison I did not feel inclined to let him know where I was, or consult him on what steps I should take to obtain my liberty. On the morning of the third day I found that for the dirty and wretched accommodation of the lock-up house I was mulcted every day of a sum sufficient to pay the charges

at the most extravagant hotel in London. Being always given to straightforward means of dealing with matters, I thought my best plan would be to write Messrs. Happs & Camp and ask them to come to me, as I could not go to them, and see if an arrangement could be made for a settlement of the affair; for I did not then know the fact that Watson's reversion was contingent on his surviving the life-tenant of the property.

Within an hour of the despatch of my note Mr. Happs himself was announced. My first impression on his entrance was astonishment that any man could have succeeded in crowding upon his person so many articles of jewellery. Diamonds sparkled from his shirtfront, his wristbands, and from almost every finger on both hands, while the festoons of gold-chain from buttonhole to pocket and from pocket to buttonhole of his waistcoat, and the malachite buttons of that garment, each one of which was surmounted with a small knob of the same precious metal, gave him the appearance of a walking jeweller's shop. Add to this an extensive display of very dazzling white shirtfront, a frock-coat, with collar, cuffs, and lappels of black velvet, thrown wide open to display his shiny, black satin waistcoat and all its adornments; black trousers, with broad, military-looking lace down the sides, and falling so copiously over the feet as only to leave visible just the very tips of a pair of extra-glossy patent leather boots, and you will be able to form some idea of the get-up of this gentleman.

On taking a re-survey of all this, from the shining boot-toes upwards, my eye reached a most uncomfortable-looking 'all round' collar, which was surmounted

by the florid, clean-shaved face of my detaining creditor. Stop: I am in error—one little tuft of hair like an island, one little spot Mr. Happs spared from the scraping of his razor when making his matutinal toilette. He wore an imperial; and a most important feature, if it may so be called, was that hirsute appendage on his face. With this exception his countenance was as smooth as smooth could be; and his hair, carefully parted on one side, was plastered down with evident care and much pomatum till it resembled brown satin. Small, dark, sparkling eyes, as sharp as needles, darted their penetrating glances from beneath a pair of eyebrows that any woman might have envied, so arched, so narrow, and so perfect were they. With every motion of his mouth, when speaking, his imperial moved about in a most extraordinary and impressive manner; it seemed to be his organ of speech, in fact, rather than his tongue. When not speaking he had a habit of biting his under-lip and drawing it in in such a way as to make the long, spiky tuft of hair stick straight out from his face like the quills of a porcupine.

'Good morning, sir,' was his salutation to me on entering. 'I have obeyed your summons and come to you at some inconvenience to myself, as you could not come to me; but, sir, the fault is your own, not mine. You have not paid the slightest heed to your friend Mr. Watson's bill from the day you signed it till you were brought here. Letters, writ, nothing but actual arrest seems to have had any effect. We, of course, want our money. With money we make money, and cannot afford to allow things of this sort to stand over. By your sending for me I presume you have something to propose

as to settlement, and I am ready to listen; but I wish to impress upon you that with me, next to money, time is the most precious thing, and I can afford you but very little of it. I am all attention to hear any proposal you have to make.'

With the close of the last word his under-lip was bitten and drawn in, bringing up instantly the bristling tuft of hair into a most hostile attitude, resembling the mass of bayonets of an infantry regiment on having the command to receive cavalry.

I will not go into the details of our short conversation. Its result was that, having heard I contemplated emigration to a far-off colony, he would be satisfied with nothing else but the actual money for the debt and costs, which latter he had contrived to run up to an amount close upon 30*l.* I now bitterly regretted having parted with Mr. Harrison in so unfriendly a manner as I had at our last interview, for I felt very reluctant to let him know of my present predicament. Without him, however, it would be impossible for me to obtain the means of paying the debt and costs for which I was arrested.

Mr. Happs wished to be put into communication with my solicitor, to endeavour to arrange with him for payment; but I knew too well that Mr. Harrison, who was the very *beau ideal* of the eminently high class lawyer, had a perfect horror of being brought into contact with those of his fraternity whom he termed 'money-lending, sharp-practice scoundrels, who disgrace the legal profession.' I therefore told him I preferred to communicate with my solicitor myself, which far from pleased him; and when we parted it

was with no great amount of good feeling on either side.

No sooner had the man of many jewels departed than the young officer I have mentioned entered, with an open newspaper in his hand, and began descanting upon the state of the odds on some race about to come off in a few days, and, laying the paper down on the table, pointed with his finger to a paragraph announcing that the favourite had been 'scratched.' As he removed his hand, after our both reading the few lines, my eye fell upon another announcement, in the next column, headed, 'Sudden Death in Bedford Row;' on reading which I learned, in a very few words, that old Mr. Harrison had, two days previously, been seized with a fit of apoplexy, from which he never recovered. In one moment I saw how his death would cause me difficulties of all kinds; but I hardly thought they would be of so long a duration as they were.

As soon as I could write a note and procure a messenger I sent for John Morris, who was not very long in coming to me. He went round to my late solicitor's office to hear particulars and ascertain who would now attend to my affairs. On his return I saw he looked serious, and he explained that, in consequence of the old gentleman's death being so sudden, all business was to a great extent thrown into confusion. The clerks could give him but little information beyond the fact that Mr. Harrison had always himself attended to my matters, and all things concerned with both my father's and uncle's wills. Until after the funeral, and things were in some measure looked into, nothing could be done either in my own business or anyone else's.

'My advice, old boy,' said Morris to me, 'is to move away from this filthy den of extortioners and go at once to Whitecross Street, where your expenses will be shillings instead of pounds, as they are here.'

I saw at a glance that his advice was good. I knew I only possessed a comparatively small sum of ready cash, and had no other means of raising any more till my reversion business was put into a proper shape. We called in the man who acted as head gaoler of the establishment, and I told him I should stay there no longer, and wished to remove at once to Whitecross Street, or whatever other prison he would take me to.

To pack my few traps, pay the extortionate charges, and get all ready to start took me but little time. The Hebrew hotel-keeper, when he found I was about to leave him, made every possible charge he could think of, and tried very hard to make me pay another guinea, as, it being then after noon, he argued I had entered upon another day. I was in no humour to be imposed upon; and, resenting all solicitations to 'remember' the dirty Jew-boy Ganymede, I departed in a cab, in charge of the same Sheriff's officer who had arrested me, accompanied by his amiable assistant. The last words I heard muttered by the Ganymede to Cerberus as I descended the steps revealed to me the fact that in their estimation I was 'no gentleman.' Considering that for filthy accommodation and detestable meals I had been mulcted over five pounds in less than three days, I concluded that in the minds of Cursitor Street hotel-keepers the terms 'gentleman' and 'fool' are synonymous.

CHAPTER II.

WHITECROSS STREET PRISON.[5]

A SHORT drive of some ten or fifteen minutes brought us to the door of the Debtors' Prison of Whitecross Street, just as the chimes of Cripplegate Church were playing Haydn's the 'Heavens are Telling,' at six o'clock. Every third hour, night and day—at three, six, nine, and twelve o'clock—do those bells chime forth. How many men who have been imprisoned within those walls as I was, have lain awake listening to their sound! 'Distance lends enchantment to the view,' says the poet; and so it does to sound. Many a time have I lain and heard those horrid chimes till I have hated them and cursed them in my heart.

Not very long before my arrest Wallace's opera of 'Maritana' had been produced, and the page's song, 'Alas! those chimes, so sweetly stealing,' sung as it was by Miss Poole, had quite charmed me—so much so, that I was always whistling or humming the air *sotto voce*. Its sweet, melancholy notes had a peculiarly soothing effect upon me whenever I felt irritated, which at that time, in consequence of the cross-way matters went with me, and the long delays I met with in getting my property realised, I too frequently did. The first night, when lying awake, the busy city all around the prison hushed and silent for a few hours, I began to

softly whistle my soothing song. The church chimes broke forth with the 'Old Hundredth' (as it appeared to me) in bitter mockery. I could not resist actually swearing at them, I am sorry to say, in a most improper way.

Before alighting from the cab my captor and custodian asked me if I would not like to step into the public-house on the opposite side of the street, informing me that I should not be able to get any spirits inside the prison, and this would be my last chance of tasting any. I took this as a broad hint that he would have no objection to a glass himself; and, as the man had been as civil over his disagreeable work as it was possible to be with a due regard to the performance of what I suppose he would term 'his duty,' I made no objection, and accordingly we all three entered.

The bar was full of customers, some of whom I afterwards found were turnkeys belonging to the prison. The landlord and barman addressed both my attendants as old friends, and I saw at a glance they knew I was a new bird for the cage on the other side of the street. I myself felt but little inclined to drink; but not so the others, who, I believe, would have stayed all night, had I paid the piper. After a third glass each I suggested it would be well to see after my traps in the cab, and we recrossed the street. I settled with the driver, took my bag in hand, and ascended a few steps, at the top of which was a massive door with glazed gratings. Through this I passed, preceded by the Sheriff's officer, and closely followed by his man, into a small stone hall, part of which was partitioned off with glass, through which I saw arranged upon the walls of an

inner room a most formidable collection of warlike weapons, consisting of brass-barrelled blunderbuses, old-fashioned horse-pistols, sundry pairs of handcuffs for refractory debtors, and a few well-preserved specimens of that renowned British firearm known as 'Brown Bess,' with bayonets and some half-dozen cutlasses and swords; the whole forming an arsenal sufficient to strike terror into the heart of the most courageous insolvent. A tall gaoler, or turnkey, as they called were, bid me step inside the glass room—the armoury—and open my bag for his inspection. Having cursorily examined it he asked me if I had any spirits about my person; and on receiving satisfactory replies politely requested me to step inside a small office, into which I had noticed the Sheriff's officer enter when first we came in. Here I was addressed by a short, dapper man, who I afterwards found was the Governor of the establishment. He bowed, and asked me if I was the person designated in the writ, and informed me I was detained on a writ of Ca. Sa., at the suit of Thomas R. Happs and Stephen Camp, for the sum of three hundred and thirty-one pounds seven shillings and tenpence. He then asked me if I were likely to remain long, or if I were going over to the Queen's Bench; to which I replied I could not tell for a few days what I should do. He put a few formal questions to me as to whether I intended to keep myself or 'go upon the county.'

'Excuse my asking such a question,' he said, 'but it is a part of my duty. You shall go into the Receiving Ward for a day or two, and I shall be glad if you will inform me as soon as possible what you intend to do, as

I cannot keep you in the Receiving Ward very long. If you are going to remain I shall have to ward you off. Are you a freeman of the City; and if so, to what Company do you belong?'

I replied I had not that honour and privilege, and asked if it made any difference.

'Not very much,' said he; 'but there is a special ward, the "Ludgate," into which those who are citizens and freemen are entitled to go; and there are certain benefits arising from charters and gifts that are occasionally distributed among the freemen.'

I winced at the bare idea of being a recipient of charitable alms, and for the first time began to realise the position to which my accommodation to poor Charley Watson had brought me. The Governor bowed me out, and transferred me to the guidance of a turnkey, who conducted me, along a stone passage between the outer wall and the main building, into a flagged hall, where, through the grating of the door at the end of it, I saw a number of men in a large open yard. Turning sharp to the left, my conductor opened an iron gate at the bottom of a flight of stone stairs and rang a bell, bidding me ascend to the first floor.

Before I reached the top a door opened and a voice cried out:

'Who rings?'

'One L. S.,' replied the man below.

'All right!' shouted the one above, who I saw was waiting my arrival at the top of the staircase.

A venerable-looking man, with a long, snow-white beard, dressed in the shabbiest of clothes, but with the unmistakable air of a decayed gentleman, received me.

He ushered me into a long, low-pitched room like the guard-room of a barrack. At either end were three windows, looking into separate yards, and securely protected by strong iron bars. Its walls and ceiling were whitewashed. Its floor was perfectly innocent of any carpet or other covering to hide its well-scrubbed boards. A large cooking range and a smaller fireplace, together with a couple of cupboards, and a large door leading into the sleeping-rooms of this Receiving Ward, occupied the side of the room opposite to the door at which I entered. Along the wall of the other side was a wooden bench reaching from the door I entered by to another door at the farther end of the room. Three plain deal tables, some half-dozen benches, an old-fashioned arm-chair and a few shelves, completed the furniture of the apartment. Embellishments it was totally destitute of, unless the printed rules of the prison pasted on a black board could in any way be regarded as ornamental.

Lounging about the benches were some half-dozen men, of different ages and positions in society, some reading, some talking, and nearly all smoking, while two, more restless than the others, were pacing up and down in earnest conversation. The old gentleman asked my name and entered it in his book, informing me that he, like myself, was a prisoner, but was Steward of the ward, and supplied those who were there with anything they required. His charges were moderate. After the extortionate demands I had been compelled to submit to at the 'robbers' den' in Cursitor Street they seemed perfect miracles of cheapness, for he provided an excellent and substantial breakfast, dinner,

and tea; and, as an American hotel-keeper—I beg pardon, *proprietor*—would say, he 'put a man through the whole day' for the modest sum of three shillings.

On my asking where I should have to sleep he conducted me into another apartment of equal size, on the same floor, with four large iron-barred windows looking out into one of the paved yards. It was furnished with a dozen stump iron bedsteads similar to those used in barracks; and on the steward turning up the clothes of one of them, he pointed out that the beds were composed of straw; but he informed me that I could, if I wished, have in my own bedding. The prison authorities provided bed, pillow, blankets, and a rug; and the Steward, Mr. Russell, for a small consideration, supplied sheets to those who objected to dispensing with such articles. He pointed out a vacant bed in a snug corner, out of the way of draughts, which he recommended for my occupation, saying that he only allowed those he considered gentlemen in that room, and located all rough-looking and undesirable customers in another apartment with only one window, which struck me as being a veritable prison indeed.

I found Mr. Russell was an old country gentleman who had in his younger days been possessed of good property, ridden with the county hounds, and followed eagerly all the sports usually pursued by his fellows; but without a due regard to balancing expenditure with income; and that this omission had entailed the necessity of periodical recourse to mortgages and loans in other shapes, including that great invention of the prince of darkness, accommodation bills, with the result of finding himself bereft of estates, horses, dogs, friends,

and everything, and reduced to fulfil the position of steward of the receiving ward of a Debtors' Prison.

When I looked upon his genial, handsome face, his white hair, and long flowing beard I could not but think Dame Fortune had dealt somewhat hardly with him. During the few days I spent in his company I witnessed many instances of his goodness of heart towards those debtors who were brought in and had not the means of paying for what they required. In some instances—too many, I fear—he was victimised by those who came into his ward, and received only promises in return for the provisions he supplied to them.

On our return to the day ward, a lame little man was busy preparing a long table for tea, to which in due time some eight or ten sat down; while others, disdaining so temperate a beverage, were seated at another table with bottled beer. During tea the bell rang; and on Mr. Russell going to the door—the key of which he always kept in his pocket—I heard the voice of the turnkey below call out 'Two small debtors.' In walked a great burly fellow, whose dress and appearance proclaimed him at once to be a labouring man. I afterwards discovered he was a bricklayer. He was followed by a miserable-looking little man who could barely stagger to one of the forms, where he threw himself down and was soon in a drunken sleep, disturbing the whole room, both by the Calibanish snorting snore he gave utterance to and the exceedingly powerful aroma of beer, rum, onions, and some compound he had been smoking under the idea it was tobacco.

I immediately congratulated Mr. Russell upon the beneficent arrangements of his establishment that

allowed of locating such a customer in a separate bedchamber to ours. The big bricklayer merely sat down in a corner by himself, evidently feeling anything but at home in his new quarters. They were both small debtors, or County Court prisoners, arrested for a few shillings, the nonpayment of which, whether arising from inability or obstinacy, is regarded as a contempt of Court, and entails the committal to Whitecross Street for such period, ranging from seven to forty days, as the Judge in his wisdom may sentence them to.[2] These County Court debtors were located in a ward by themselves, in which also were contained those who had been remanded from the Insolvent Court, as a sort of purgatorial expiation either of their extravagance, or of what the Commissioner of the Court regarded as their dishonesty, in incurring debt. All this is now altered. Insolvent Courts are swept away; and yet the laws regarding debtors and creditors, bankruptcy and insolvency, seem as far off perfection as ever, hardly a session of Parliament passing over without some attempt being made to alter, tinker, patch up, and improve one or more clauses in the laws relating thereto.

I soon began to find that, in coming to Whitecross Street, I had entered an entirely new world. New at least it was to me; and it was not long before I had so much to contemplate in those around me that my own affairs and position almost passed for the moment from my mind.

The little man who had acted as servant and waiter in getting the tea ready and clearing it away turned his attention to the sonorous and odoriferous sleeper, whom he succeeded, after much trouble, in

removing to his couch in some remote corner of the dark room, much to the satisfaction of everyone.

After looking round, with a view of selecting one or other of my co-unfortunates with whom to enter into conversation, I went up to the big bricklayer and commenced acquaintance by opening my tobacco-pouch and offering the wherewithal to replenish the empty pipe he clutched in his left hand as if it were some treasure he was guarding. I filled my own 'dudheen,' and after lighting up, asked him what machination of the evil one had caused his coming to such a place. A few whiffs of the weed, which was some very choice American 'honeydew' that a friend, who knew my weakness in that line, had presented me with before I went into Wales, seemed to act as a charm on the man—who, I expect, never before smoked its like—and loosened both his tongue and his heart. He repeated all his case, and in doing so opened up quite a new experience of life to me.

He had been arrested that afternoon and taken from his work, at some new buildings in course of construction, where he was employed in his trade of bricklayer. He complained of the people being very hard and sharp upon him. The debt was a tallyman's account for some articles of dress which had been almost forced upon his wife, to be paid for in small weekly instalments, which she had not regularly kept up. From his account the prices charged were something most exorbitant, and far beyond double the sum the articles could have been bought for at an ordinary shop. The tallymen go round to the working people's houses when the men are away at their work, and by showing their gaudy finery and plying their 'soft sawder' induce the

wives to make purchases under the temptation of easy weekly payments. So long as these are kept up all goes on well; and if the tempter finds money regularly forthcoming, he extends the credit and supplies more and more goods. At last, from some cause or other, lapses take place, and then the honeyed, persuasive words of the accommodating tallyman are changed for threats. The articles that are the subject of the debt and its incubus are taken to the pawnshop, where at once their comparative worthlessness is speedily discovered; at any rate, the difference between the price charged by Mr. Honeysweet and the sum advanced by Mr. Two-to-one shows an awful discrepancy. The little they realise goes to stop the creditor for one week. When next he calls, something else has to go to meet his demand; and in the end, when arrears accumulate, the tallyman takes his claim, with some scores more of the same sort, to the County Court and summonses are issued. These, in many cases, are never attended to; in fact the wife, possibly anxious not to cause any quarrel with her husband, hides the threatening-looking paper away, or destroys it, saying nothing about it, in the hope that something may enable her to put off the evil in store. At last comes judgment; and execution is either put in upon the goods and chattels of the family, or what is called a judgment summons issued, the result being the arrest of the breadwinner, as in the case of the big bricklayer, who, by way of improving matters, is taken from his work, locked up for some weeks, during which his wife and family either half starve on the proceeds of the few remnants of their furniture and clothes, or go on the parish, and

the husband, on his release, returns to his work to find his place occupied by some other man, and has to look elsewhere for employment, with the liability of his old debts still hanging over his head, and the probability of having to go through the same thing all over again. It is not at all an uncommon thing for some of the keepers of tallyshops to have twenty and even fifty cases at a County Court. Truly such men must be a curse to the families of working men wherever they go.

At the regulation hour the loud clanging of a bell gave notice that the time for going to bed had arrived. But though the authorities may make rules as to what time a man is to retire to bed, not all the Courts of Aldermen and Common Council, under whose superintendence this City prison for debtors is supposed to be, even with the aid of the Home Secretary, who has a controlling voice in the matter, can frame any rule to compel a man to go to sleep, as I found that first night, to my great discomfort.

What with chafing over my position; the first trial of a straw bed (I have slept soundly enough on many a worse couch since); the lying in a room with some eight or nine other persons, all utter strangers; the noise of singing kept up in the other wards of the prison till a late hour; and last, but very far from least, the precious clock and chimes of Cripplegate Church, the tower of which was immediately contiguous, frustrated completely all my efforts to woo the drowsy god. Every fifteen minutes as they passed were noted by the loud chimes of that terrible clock. Each hour was struck upon its bell and repeated from the various City church-towers, including that of St. Paul's, whose sonorous

boom sounded clear and distinct above them all in the quiet, hushed hours of the night. During the day, and indeed from a very early hour in the morning, the busy hum of London life deadened all other sounds except its own and the adjacent clock of Cripplegate. I tried in vain to sleep. Whenever I so far succeeded as to doze, the demon of the clock would call me back again to full consciousness. I remembered that John Milton lay slumbering beneath the church, and endeavoured to repeat scraps and portions of his wondrous writings, but with no better success as regarded falling asleep. I lay and watched the gradual dawn of day, and conjectured what the rising of the sun over the roofs and chimneys of London must be like. I have before and since watched for the glorious god of day to make his first appearance, both in England and abroad. I have seen his advent on the young day under many circumstances. In England, when he creeps quietly up over the distant woods on the one hand, as the paling stars reluctantly retreat before his approach on the other, and field after field of ripening corn catches his beams as he mounts higher and higher; in mid-ocean, in the tropics, where he bursts suddenly forth, as it were, with vigorous leap into the full maturity of all his majesty. And yet again on the upper ranges of the Liverpool Mountains, in New South Wales, I have watched each lofty peak as it caught his approaching rays, while the gullies at their feet were still in darkness; and the gradual lighting up of valley after valley as, mounting higher and higher in the glorious blue heavens, his beams darted between the screening hills. I have often thought I should like to see him rise over mighty

London; to watch him from some height, St. Paul's or the Monument. But that morning, lying on the straw bed in Whitecross Debtors' Gaol, I could see but little that was beautiful, though I joyfully hailed his approach, as I felt I should be better up than lying there.

No sooner was it light than Mr. Russell turned out, and, taking a towel, left the room. I conjectured that he had gone to indulge in some sort of bath, and on his return I asked him if I could do the same. All the accommodation the place afforded was a stone sink in a large cupboard leading from the Day Ward, and there, with an abundant flow of water, I enjoyed the best substitute at hand for a cold bath. I dressed before any of the others had turned out, which they did not do till the prison bell at eight o'clock gave forth its summons for all to rise.

Mr. Russell busied himself with his domestic arrangements, superintending the lame little man whilst the latter prepared our breakfasts, consisting of tea and coffee, bread, toast, eggs, bacon, and herrings, to which all seemed to do ample justice. The County Court men, or small debtors, had their morning meal brought to them from below, consisting of a large hunch of bread and a tin of gruel. The burly bricklayer looked hard at it, but set to with a will to enjoy it. The other one had not quite recovered his drunken fit of the night before, and begged in vain of the Steward to be supplied with some beer. Failing that, he was fain to quench his burning thirst with water. Neither gruel nor bread did he touch. He seemed to be well known as a visitor, having had repeated doses of arrest and imprisonment. It was jokingly said, I know not with what truth, that his wife,

who was a sober, industrious woman, arranged matters with some one who had lent money to 'Snob Joe' (such was the name they called him, he being a cobbler by trade when it suited him to work, and owning the name of Joseph), to arrest him every now and then when he got very outrageous at home and very much on the drink, so that she and her family might have a little peace, quiet, and comfort, while the husband and father was out of harm's way and temptation securely locked up in Whitecross Street.

After breakfast Mr. Russell announced that prayers would be read in the Chapel, and that those who liked could go; adding that after the service the Chaplain, the Rev. Mr. Carver, would visit the ward, and that he liked to see as many in chapel as possible. As much, I fear, *pour passer le temps*, as for any other reason, I went with the others, and found the Chapel was close adjacent to our ward. It was a very ordinary, plain edifice, and had all the appearance of some humble Dissenting place of worship. A few of the morning service prayers were read, together with part of a chapter of the Bible, which the Chaplain, an old white-headed gentleman, explained to his small, *very small* congregation, for there were not five-and-twenty there, including the Governor and several turnkeys.

On returning to the ward we found the head turnkey or deputy-Governor there, and he gave instructions to Mr. Russell as to who were to be 'warded off' out of his small community. The two small debtors were sent to the realms below with very little ceremony, not even returning from Chapel. This 'warding off' seemed to be much dreaded by some of the debtors, and they

nearly all made excuses for remaining in the receiving rooms; some pleading ill health, others that they expected to 'arrange' and get out either in the course of that day or the next. To each one the official gave an attentive and courteous hearing; but when all was finally settled our numbers were reduced to three, besides Mr. Russell and his factotum, whom he addressed as Morris. Morris, I may say, had been a steward on board ship, and was in every way a handy man and most efficient assistant to Mr. Russell. There was nothing that he could not do, and he was at work all day long. His culinary talents were of no mean order, and quite cosmopolitan in their range. It was here I first tasted a cod's head dressed in true Yankee fashion, and called 'chowder.' His curries would not have disgraced the 'Oriental' or the 'Barnchute;' and the way in which he boiled a potato—that most difficult of all 'plain cooking'—would have delighted the heart of any Irishman.

We were supplied by Mr. Russell with the morning papers; but I had hardly taken up the 'Times' when in walked the Chaplain, bowing to everyone as he entered, and, coming straight up to me, commenced a conversation by asking, in a particularly mild voice, a whole string of questions.

'Were you at Chapel this morning?'

This I replied to in the affirmative, and with some little surprise, as we had sat in a front gallery not ten feet from him, and I noticed he looked attentively at each one in the Receiving Ward seats.

'Are you going to stay long here?'

'That all depends upon circumstances, but I trust not,' was my reply.

'I do not remember having seen you here before. Is this your first time of being here? Have you come from Sloman's?' were the next questions this most inquisitive of clergymen rapidly asked me, not giving time for reply to one before asking another. Having satisfied him on all points, he asked me if there were any news in the paper, and, wishing to close a conversation that consisted entirely of inquisitive interrogatories on the reverend gentleman's part, I handed him the 'Times,' saying I had only just glanced at it, and did not know.

He took it from me and began to read, standing with his back to the fire. I walked to the other end of the room, and with another paper proceeded to read till I heard one of the other debtors say, in a loud, angry voice:

'What's that to you? Mind your own business and attend to your preaching and what you are paid for.'

I looked up and instantly saw that Mr. Carver's somewhat impertinent questions had not been taken in very good part by this testy insolvent, who did not seem to take his misfortunes and troubles with at all a good grace.

The Clerico answered something in a voice too low for me to hear, to which the other rejoined:

'Then I'll thank you not to trouble me. It will be quite time enough for you to interfere in my affairs when you're asked.'

Hearing what was going on, and, I expect, having a shrewd suspicion of the state of the case, Mr. Russell hurried from the next room, and entering into conversa-

tion with the Chaplain, drew him away from the gentleman who so strongly objected to his reverence's catechisation. He seemed to take his rebuff in good part, and I suspect it was far from a solitary instance, for, to say the least of it—though no doubt the old gentleman meant to be all that is kind in his inquiries—his questions had too inquisitorial a twang about them to be well received by many men smarting under the annoyance of 'durance vile,' and perhaps of worse troubles looming in the distance.

As soon as the 'Parson' had taken his departure I laid aside my paper and turned my attention to the yards below, of which a good view was obtained from the windows at each end of our long room.

Ten o'clock had now struck, the hour when visitors were admitted, and several were arriving and crossing the yard with their husbands, fathers, and friends from the entrance-gate to the respective wards. The window I first visited looked into a large, almost square, yard paved with flagstones, bordered on three sides with prison wards three stories high, and on the fourth by a wall shutting off the women's ward, against which was a large pump, or rather fixed fire-engine, fitted for ten or twelve men to work each side. The pumping at this engine formed a frequent source of amusement and exercise to the imprisoned debtors.

Two wards used this yard—the 'Ludgate,' or Freemen's Ward, and the 'Giltspur.' The Remand and County Court Ward looked into the end of the yard opposite to the pump, but its inmates had only the use of a very narrow yard at the back or other side of the ward, with the occasional privilege, during certain hours of

the day, of using another large yard on the other side of the Ludgate and Giltspur Wards, and occupying the space between them and the wall of the prison in Red-cross Street, which yard was generally used as a racquet ground. It was not till I got to the Bench and saw the splendid racquet courts there, the finest perhaps in the kingdom, that I appreciated this beautiful game. Many of the visitors came loaded with baskets and bags of provisions, all of which had already undergone a rigid search at the first gate, to see that no spirits were brought in. Twice in the day, at twelve and again at five, beer was brought in and supplied to such as chose to pay for it. Those who could afford wine were permitted to have it in to the extent of one pint for each person a day; and in cases where the Doctor saw reason to give an order to that effect, one quartern of spirits was allowed to be brought in. These spirit orders were very much abused; many applying for and obtaining them merely for the purpose of selling them at a handsome premium to those who had means at their disposal to indulge their craving for spirits. Children were allowed to come in, and then the place was like a fair. Wednesday was looked forward to with feelings of dread by those who had no little ones of their own to come and visit them, and when the bell rang for visitors to leave, its sound was more or less welcome to the majority of those who were debarred the privilege of passing out into the open free street. Many of the scenes of meeting I looked out upon from the window into the yard below were more or less amusing, while others were touching in the extreme. There would come the careworn young wife whose arrival had been anxiously

looked forward to for hours before, both for her own sake and for the news she would bring as to the success or failure of her efforts to induce obdurate creditors to listen to terms of mercy and of reason. Delicately nurtured and educated, used in her girlish home to refinement and comfort, she shrinks with undisguised disgust from the associates she is brought in contact with in her visits to him she has bound herself to for better or worse. The quiet, ladylike dress, with its artful attempts to disguise the ravages of wear and tear, but which fail to hide the inevitable look of 'shabby-genteel' that is fast coming over it, is totally different to the gaudy, flaring finery, all spick-and-span new, of the publican's buxom wife who, entering with her, *will* insist on thrusting her acquaintance on her, even to an invitation to have a glass at the Peacock, opposite the prison gates, greatly to the poor lady's discomfiture and horror. How different is her modest entrance into that yard to that of Mrs. Boniface! How eagerly she looks out for *him* she alone comes to see! And when he, who has been so anxiously watching that wicket-gate, at last catches sight of the top of the pretty little cottage straw bonnet that he knows so well, and which just shows about an inch above the grating in the door, how he rushes forward to receive her! One squeeze of the hand, one glance, each of which tells volumes; and he takes her under his arm into some quiet snug corner of the ward, where the one can tell and the other listen to all the news of the progress of the endeavours to obtain release without a recourse to the Insolvent Court, and, possibly, without the entire break-up of their dearly-cherished home—the home that both have taken such pride and

pleasure in furnishing. The arrival of Mrs. Boniface is far different. The window I look out of is almost over the wicket-gate. I hear her loud and hearty greetings to the turnkeys, and know well, as I catch the sound of her voice calling familiarly to some prisoner in the yard, 'How do, Mr. Canute? Where's my old man this morning? Just tell Boniface I'm 'ere, and got an 'amper for him,' that not an inch only of her bonnet shows over the grating, but that her whole jolly and comely face, surmounted with quite a nosegay of full-blown flowers, and surrounded with lace and ribbons of most decided hues—no neutral tints or subdued shades for her—is beaming with smiles of congratulation as she thus addresses one after the other of her 'old man's' associates; the majority of whom will in an hour or two's time be seated at the same table and partaking of the welcome contents of the well-supplied 'amper' she has just brought from Mile End in a cab.

I cannot say I looked forward to a closer and more intimate acquaintance with the inmates of the wards and their friends with any great degree of pleasure, though I was much interested and amused at a great deal that I saw, and I resolved to ask Mr. Russell how long I could manage to stay in his quieter though much more restricted quarters.

Hearing a shouting in the other yard, into which the windows at the opposite end of the room looked forth, I hastened thither just in time to see a man, minus his hat, which some of the debtors were kicking about like a football, with his coat torn into shreds and flying like streamers as he ran, chased and buffeted round the yard by at least twenty men, calling at the

top of their voices, 'Rat! rat! catch him and souse him!' They did catch him, and in spite of his struggles bore him to one corner of the yard, where already willing arms were pumping forth a torrent of water, under which the poor wretch was held till I thought they would smother and kill him. Indeed they would have done so but for two of the turnkeys who went across the yard to his rescue, one of them calling out, 'That will do, gentlemen; you have given him quite enough.' They rescued him more dead than alive, and led him, dripping and panting, into a place of safety in their own domain, the debtors meanwhile yelling and groaning at the top of their voices.

Mr. Russell, who was beside me looking on, explained that the man was a lawyer's clerk, who had been foolish enough to go in, under pretext of visiting a debtor, to serve him with a copy of a writ; and on the prisoner holding up the paper and calling out 'Rat!' the whole ward had turned out to serve out the 'process-server' in the way I had witnessed.

At the time I recollected how I was served at the door of the Tavistock Hotel with my writ, and the Hibernian gentleman's remark, and I sincerely regretted that some of the Covent Garden Market people had not served Messrs. Happs & Camp's clerk in a similar way.

This yard belonged to what was called the Middlesex side of the prison, for debtors arrested in the county, and was very similar to that on the London side.

At one o'clock a bell was rung as a signal that those strangers and visitors who wished to go out, must do so at once or else be locked in till two o'clock, as the turnkeys' dinner-hour was from one to two, during

which time there was no ingress or egress allowed, all doors being kept locked. At four, all friends and outsiders had to leave for the day, no one but solicitors being permitted to come in and see debtors after that hour. After we had finished our dinner, one of our party, a very respectable-looking elderly man, whose two sons and solicitor had been in several times to visit him during the morning, received his discharge and took his leave. He had been in a most anxious state all the day as to the negotiations for his release, and he assured us at dinner that if he did not get his liberty that day, so as to keep an appointment of great importance in his business on the following morning, it would be the utter ruin of himself and family. When his son came with the news that the creditor had accepted the offered terms and his discharge had come down, the man seemed almost beside himself with joy; but when his solicitor afterwards entered and told him it was necessary to search the Sheriff's office, to see if there were any detainers from other creditors against him before the Governor could act on the discharge, I thought he was going to fall into a fit. Never did I see a man in so great a state of intense mental excitement, which he evidently did his very best to conceal. He sat down speechless and motionless, with his hands clenched and his eyes fixed on vacancy, perfectly heedless of a low conversation carried on between his son and the solicitor. After an hour the ward bell rang, and Mr. Russell went to the door, and on its being opened we heard the voice of the turnkey below call, 'Mr. Blanque's discharge.'

Up sprang the man *instanter*, and, throwing down

some money on the table, told Mr. Russell to give any change over his account to some of the poor County Court debtors; and telling his son and friend to come at once, he ran down the stairs quite fast for a man of his years.

The next morning I heard what fully accounted for his state of anxiety. He had been arrested for one debt in the City, and had settled it as best he could. The fact of his arrest reached the ears of other creditors, and within an hour of the City Sheriff's office being searched and a clean 'bill of health' being granted, on which the Governor of the prison acted and let him go, several arrests for large sums were transferred from the Middlesex Sheriff's office to that of the City; but too late—the bird had escaped, and that night crossed the Channel. Two days afterwards, the morning papers announced the failure of the firm of Blanque & Company, and the absconding of the senior partner. The intensity of that hour's excitement while the Sheriff's office was searched, was at once accounted for. The failure, the flight, and the very narrow escape of Mr. Blanque were the topic of conversation on 'Change for several days after.

On the second or third evening after my arrival at what I found was familiarly called by the debtors and their correspondents 'Burden's Hotel,' or 'Cripplegate Coffee House,' the little bell sounded loudly, and the customary call from below of 'One L. S.'—*i.e.* London side—was followed by the entrance into the ward of a jaunty-looking man, with a well-filled carpet-bag in his hand. He was scrupulously neat in his dress, and evidently had taken no small pains with his personal appearance; but it did not require to enter into conversation with

him to discover the obsequious tradesman. I could have sworn I had seen him in more than one drapery establishment doing the ornamental work known as 'shop-walking.' Unlike most men—who entered that room with sad hearts and dejected looks, weighed down by the trouble and vexation of their arrest, and all the consequences that would accrue from it to dear ones at home—he smiled most affably, almost familiarly, as, after depositing his baggage on a bench, he advanced up the room hat in hand, and bowing to those seated round the table.

Judging from my own feelings when first I arrived in the place, and from observation of all I had seen brought in before, I was not a little surprised at the evident self-satisfied and perfectly contented manner of this man. His demeanour was more like that of one on entering the coffee-room of a first-class hotel than the ward of a debtors' prison.

Mr. Russell, who as usual had opened the door for him, followed him down the room, after turning his key and withdrawing it from the lock, and overtaking him, asked if he would step on one side to the window-sill which constituted his bureau. Here he asked the customary questions for the purpose of entry in his book. He proceeded in his usual way quietly to explain the arrangements; but Mr. Temple, the new arrival, anxious to make no secret of any of his wishes or arrangements, addressed himself in a loud voice to Mr. Russell in particular and the whole company in general:

'Oh, sir, I shall do the best to put up with your accommodation. Let me have the best you have, and I will pay for it. My stay will not be many days, and I

do not mean to make myself more uncomfortable than necessary.'

Drawing a cigar-case from his pocket, he offered a cigar to each of the three seated at the table.

'Will you take a weed, sir?—and you, sir? I have plenty in my bag, and shall have more in the morning. Don't be afraid of robbing me.'

The offer of a cigar is too seldom made in such a place to be lightly refused, and Mr. Temple was impregnated with an aroma that told at once that the cigars he smoked were of very fair quality. I took one, as also did the others, and found my conjecture was correct. They were pretty good.

'Smoking's dry work, gentlemen. Is there no getting any wine or grog here?' was Mr. Temple's first remark after lighting up.

'You can have some beer, sir,' was the ready reply of Morris, the lame factotum of the ward, ever on the look-out for a customer for beer, as the profits obtainable on the sale of that article were a perquisite of his own.

'Bottled stout, pale or Scotch ale, but wine don't suit our lockers; and as for spirits, you must wait till you get down into the wards below, and then you may get a drop on the sly.'

'Bring me a bottle of Bass, Morris,' I said, seeing this self-satisfied new arrival was about to do the grand and stand treat all round. I was determined to baulk him of his opportunity; for there was a something in his manner I did not like, and I did not care to accept any further favour from him. Indeed, I did not estimate the flavour of his cigar quite so highly as at first, and would have cast it away and used my pipe; but not wishing to

insult the man gratuitously, I patiently smoked it out. 'Bring me a bottle of Bass, Morris, and two glasses. Will you help me, Mr. Russell, to get through it?'

'I was just going to invite Mr. Russell and all of you to drink at my expense. It's my first visit here, and I shall not be a very long stayer,' said Temple. 'Won't you join me, gentlemen?' turning to the others. 'Here, bring three or four bottles more,' he called to Morris, as those he invited quietly signified their thanks for his offer.

'We hear many people that come here say they are only going to stay a day or two,' said little Morris as he brought the bottles and proceeded to prepare for drawing their corks, 'but some of them find it a sight easier to come in than get out. There's a man on the Middlesex poor side that when first he came he wouldn't take either his clothes or his boots off for a long time. Jerry Hales, who is cook now in the Ludgate, was Steward's man here, in my berth; and he told me he never took anything off, not even his hat, for a fortnight, as he was always expecting some of his friends to come and pay him out. At last he began to get so dirty and *crummy* that the people of the ward complained of him to the Governor, and so he and the Doctor compelled him to take off his clothes and have a bath. Well, he's here now, and it's gone over two years since he came in.'

'Ah, my man, he was different to me. I shall be out in three days; it's all arranged,' said Mr. Temple, with the air of one who wished to impress upon the company the idea that he could go out whenever he pleased.

'Yes, I guessed as much when I see you come in,' replied Morris, taking up the money Mr. Temple and I

had put down on the table for the beer, and walking away, giving a very knowing look at Russell as he did so.

A general conversation on various topics took place, but no further allusion was made either by Temple or anyone else to his going out; and in due time, at half-past nine, the clanging of the bell warned us that the regulation hour for retiring to bed had arrived.

I had no opportunity till next morning of asking Mr. Russell what he thought of his latest visitor.

'Oh, there are plenty like him come here. His is a friendly arrest. He has his schedule for the Insolvent Court all ready prepared, and no doubt a copy of it in his bag. Depend upon it his solicitor will be here soon. He will sign the proper papers to file his petition in the course of the day, if he has not done so before being arrested. He has bail all ready to put in, and before the bulk of his creditors have a suspicion that anything is wrong he will be out, with a protection in his pocket. That is the way the knowing ones—those who deliberately intend to *do* their creditors—manage their business. Once they get their petitions filed and get out on bail, the opposition in the Court is of very little use. They get through there, and then snap their fingers at the people they have done so cleverly. It is only the honest fools like us, who wait till their creditors get judgments and the whip-hand, so that when they do get here they are at their mercy. The people, no doubt, to whom this Mr. Temple is indebted are tradesmen of one sort and another who have supplied him with goods or raw material for his business, whatever it is, and who seldom sue their debtors. The majority of the creditors that detain debtors in this place, are bill-discounters or money-lenders in some shape or other.'

Events proved that the old gentleman's conjectures of the man Temple were perfectly correct. So soon as visitors could be admitted, his solicitor, a sharp practice man, one of the children of Israel and of the tribe of Levi, came with a voluminous bundle of papers, which Temple signed. One paper he had to go down and sign in the presence of the Governor of the prison. They comprised his schedule, as Mr. Russell had prophesied. Some friends who came later in the day to see him, brought all sorts of things to enable him to pass his time in prison as pleasantly as possible, and two of them were the parties who were to be his bail. It turned out that his household furniture was all snugly secured by a bill of sale to his wife's brother, and his stock-in-trade and plant were legally made over to another relative. There was nothing for his creditors but some imaginary assets in the shape of book debts and other matters not worth the trouble of making over to his kind relatives, who, so soon as the Commissioner gave him his discharge, would generously hand him back furniture, stock-in-trade, and everything else, and he would repay them by taking bills of sale or assignments from them at a future time when it suited their arrangements to follow his example and get rid of a host of troublesome and inconvenient debts and liabilities by the easy method of a short visit to Whitecross Street, and an interview with Mr. Commissioner Phillips or Mr. Commissioner Law at their respective courts in Portugal Street.

It was not everyone however, who came fully prepared and with their schedules all ready cut-and-dried like this man Temple. Some were the victims of pure

misfortune; and others, having once got into the clutches of bill-discounters and professional money-lenders, struggled vainly to pay everyone, including the exorbitant and extortionate demands of these curses of society. Many men had a horror of the Insolvent Court, and struggled year after year to avoid having recourse to its 'whitewashing' process, choosing rather to involve themselves and families in endless trouble and difficulty, giving renewals of debts and bills, signing warrants of attorney, and all sorts of legal and diabolical documents, that became so many chains and fetters upon their efforts, eventually resulting in bringing them back time after time to 'Whitecross Street,' often to spend days or weeks in durance vile, during which time what little business they were engaged in would go to worse rack-and-ruin, and their wives and families be advanced one more step towards poverty and the workhouse. Sacrifices are made, money somehow scraped together, to pay a further sum to Shylock and his attorney, who have the debtor in their meshes—a new warrant of attorney for perhaps a larger sum than the old debt, so rapidly and so fearfully do the two cancers, *costs* and *interest*, increase—and the man is once more let out to make a further fruitless effort. On resuming his place in his business he finds his absence has already given rise to suspicion. He hears of this one and that one having called in his absence, pressing for settlement of accounts they have not yet sued for. In a short time after his release the new warrant of attorney he has given, the new chain, stronger and with closer rivets, that his money-lending creditor has bound him with, which he fondly hoaxed himself would be

quite a secret known only to himself and the Python in whose coils he is so firmly bound, is published in Stubbs's and all the other so-called Trade Protection lists, and the whole world of creditors knows at once exactly what has taken place. If he be a tradesman, the wholesale houses at once refuse further supplies and notify their desire to have 'their account reduced.'

In the end the struggle has to be abandoned; in sporting parlance, 'the sponge is thrown up;' and at last when one creditor issues a Fi. Fa.,[3] and seizes his goods, furniture, and stock-in-trade, another one puts into force his judgment on the warrant of attorney by means of a Ca. Sa.,[3] and the sheriff's officer arrests and walks him off to Whitecross. He leaves his wife and children with a man in possession of the home which is to be broken up in the course of a few days by the sledge-hammer of the auctioneer, each blow of which sends far and wide some useful and perhaps long-cherished object, some article purchased years ago, when that home was first formed—in the days when the young man and wife started on the rough course of life. At last, when bereft of all, and with his dear ones either dragging out a miserable, half-starved existence in some wretched lodging, or eating the bread of sympathy, if not actual charity, at the house of friend or relative who has taken them in out of compassion till 'poor Smith' gets out of his trouble and through the Court—that very Insolvent Court they have all striven so hard to avoid—how very different is the re-entry into the world of 'poor Smith,' discharged by the Court, from that of Mr. Temple! The one meets his family at the house of the good friend or relative who has afforded them a

shelter, and so saved them from seeking parish relief. Perhaps he only finds part of his little flock, as, if they be many, most probably they have been distributed among those who have played the Samaritan's part. He feels delighted at the regaining of his liberty. But then comes the thought that his friend will only be too glad when, now that he is 'once more free,' he can provide a home elsewhere to take his family to. For Jones, the Samaritan, is for the moment oblivious of the fact—the very disagreeable fact, only too forcibly impressing itself upon the mind of 'poor Smith,' and greatly marring the pleasure of rejoining his better half and olive branches—that he, Smith the 'free,' is also Smith the impecunious, and has not a 'feather to fly with.' Mr. Temple, on the contrary, is met at the Court by his friends, who congratulate him on its being 'all right' and afterwards escort him back to 'Burden's Hotel, Cripplegate,' whither he has to return to go through the formalities of discharge. Then, after a glass or two at the Peacock, opposite, to which one or two of the turnkeys, whose 'duty' will permit them to come, are invited, they accompany him to the house that, before going to Whitecross, he so cleverly made all 'snug and sure,' and of which his obliging brother-in-law has taken such great care. Here his family and a select circle of relatives and friends assembled, either at a late dinner or a 'nice hot supper,' according to the tastes of the Temple family and the position in life they may adorn, are waiting to offer their congratulations upon his success, and crack their jokes upon how 'old Wilkins,' the largest creditor, feels now it's over how Cadford, whose attempt to oppose the Commissioner

would not listen to, because he had not conformed with the rules of the Court, liked it, after having to pay counsel all for nothing; and what a capital joke it was on the part of old Commissioner Law to tell the insolvent—looking sternly at him over his spectacles—'he hoped he should not see him there again.'

Both parties, *Temple* and *Smith*, have undergone the whitewashing process and obtained their release from debt and prison, by appealing to the laws of their country and taking advantage of the means thereby provided. But how different the process has been to each, and particularly to their wives and families; and how different each starts on his new journey in life —the *worldly wisdom* of the one, who took the precaution of preparing his schedule and making all snug and safe before entering upon the 'process,' and who took advantage of the law; and the 'honest folly (?)' of the other, who, struggling on to the last to pay his debts, just and unjust, failed in so doing, and accordingly suffered the consequences! How the conscience of each was affected is a thing the outside world has but small chance of judging. Possibly one of the first steps necessary to be taken prior to the *deliberate* preparation of such a schedule and application to the Court as men of the Temple class have to take, is to stifle or get rid altogether of everything appertaining to the nature of conscience or really honest feeling. A conscience must be a most unwelcome and uncongenial companion during such a whitewashing process and for a long time afterwards.

After several days, finding the confinement of the Receiving Ward and the total deprivation of all out-

door air or exercise, most irksome; and hearing from the parties who had the arrangement of my late solicitor's (Mr. Harrison) affairs in hand, that it would be some time before mine could possibly receive any attention, I determined to leave Mr. Russell's department and face the discomforts I heard of in the wards below which were described to me as 'life in a tap-room.'

I accordingly signified my intention to the Governor one morning when he visited the room with the Chaplain after morning service.

In the afternoon, after the visitors had all been 'rung out,' and the turnkeys had gone round to see that none of their own *special lodgers* had departed with them, I was sent for and conducted by one of them into the Giltspur Ward.

After crossing the yard I had so often looked into through the grated windows, I entered a long, rather low-pitched room on the ground floor, some sixty or seventy feet long, with windows on each side, secured by strong iron bars, and looking out on either side into the two yards I have mentioned before.

At every window was a narrow fixed table, with wooden benches on each side. A passage some twelve or fourteen feet wide was left between the two rows of tables, and along this gangway, strong cocoa-nut matting covered the flagstone flooring. Some fifty men were in the ward, variously occupied; some seated at tables, where preparations for a *table d'hôte* tea were being made; others making ready their own evening meal, and some writing, reading, or lounging about. The entrance of myself and two new arrivals caused most of them to look up; and some, whose acquaintance I had

made during their short stay in the Receiving Ward, nodded a friendly recognition. The turnkey led us to a table at the end of the room, and introduced each of us to the 'Chairman of the ward,' a debtor, elected by the whole community, who, with a deputy-chairman and a committee, kept order, and managed all the affairs, both social and financial, of the little commonwealth.

The Chairman was a gentleman of the long robe, a barrister, whom trouble and misfortune of some kind had brought to his present position. He asked me to be seated while he explained all the initiatory routine of becoming a member of the Giltspur Ward of what some one had named the 'Hospital of the Knights of the White Cross.' The prison authorities, civic or governmental, whoever they were that took the trouble to keep us all in safe custody, provided in this room nothing but bare floors, tables, and benches, together with gas and a certain allowance of coals, which latter, judging from the enormous fire kept up in the large range at the end of the room opposite to where we entered, was on a liberal scale. All plates, dishes, and conveniences of every description had to be provided by the 'gentlemen debtors' themselves. Each one could, if he wished it, provide his own, but few did so. All the necessary articles required for table and other uses were the common property of the community, and provided out of a fund raised by the payment of a fee of one guinea by everyone who entered the ward. This payment, once made, lasted so long as the man remained, whether the time were only a few days or extended, as it did in some unfortunate cases, to many years. The constant influx of new debtors, the average duration of whose stay was but a few weeks, provided

guineas enough to furnish all that was requisite and decent. The funds of the ward were supplemented by a weekly payment made by the Governor out of certain moneys derivable from some of the numerous City charitable bequests for the benefit of poor debtors; and this weekly sum was apportioned in the payment of several poorer debtors who were elected to their offices, and who performed the necessary work and attendance of servants in the ward, such as the making of beds, cleaning everything, including boots and knives, cooking, and domestic work in general. When there were no debtors in the ward who were not yet brought down so low as to do menial work—too proud, some would say—or otherwise disinclined to take any of the menial offices upon themselves, it was customary to ask permission from the Governor to have other men in from either the County Court or other wards, the members of which were generally only too glad to earn the few shillings paid every week for such services. The Chairman himself was paid ten shillings a week to see that the servants attended to their duties, to keep the accounts, and superintend matters generally. The ward funds provided a liberal supply of the daily and weekly papers, which after use were sold by auction at the end of each week. There was also a Steward in this ward, whose office was a much-coveted one. All the members of the ward were at liberty to provide themselves in such way as best suited their own tastes and conveniences. Some, in little coteries of two, three, or perhaps four, at one table, would make up a mess together, one of the party, with a taste that way, acting as *comprador*, or caterer. Others would mess *solus*; while the majority, and especially first arri-

vals, and those not likely to stay very long, joined what was called the Steward's table, paying him two shillings and sixpence per diem, for which very moderate sum he provided an excellent breakfast, dinner, and tea. When the stewardship was in the hands of a man who understood his business it was a profitable office.

Bell, the man who was Steward of the Giltspur during my visit, was an eating-house keeper and publican when in the outer world, and had he confined himself to those generally lucrative vocations, of which he was a competent master, and refrained from horse-dealing and betting—at which, I expect, he was not so proficient—he would not have had the honour of catering for me. It was said that Bell made so good a thing of his Stewardship, which he managed most admirably, that he was in no hurry to obtain his liberty and vacate it. The *on dit* was that his wife had his discharge in her pocket; but so long as he could profitably keep a *table d'hôte* with no expenses for rent, taxes, gas, or fuel, and very little if anything for servants, both Mr. and Mrs. Bell hesitated upon entering upon the liabilities of taking an establishment where rent-collectors and tax-gatherers would make their periodical and unwelcome visits.

On paying the Chairman my one-pound-one, and stating my intention to 'be put through' at the Steward's table, I was informed that, this being Wednesday, it was committee night, and that so soon as the accounts for the week had been read and passed by the ward in meeting assembled, an harmonic assembly would be held, to which the gentlemen of the adjoining ward of Ludgate were invited.

Tea was despatched, all tables were cleared, and

everyone in his seat, by seven o'clock, when the Chairman rose, and, sounding his hammer, demanded attention while he read the accounts of the week, which had been duly audited by two gentlemen appointed for the purpose. The accounts, which showed a good balance in hand, having been passed in the usual way, the Chairman asked if any member had a motion to bring forward. One gentleman immediately rose to his feet:

'Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, I have a serious complaint to make of the way in which the bed warden neglects his duties. I have repeatedly pointed out to him the disgraceful state of my bed, which is all to pieces. I have asked him till I am tired to change it and get me another. It is only fit for——'

'A donkey's breakfast,' called out some one at the farther end of the room.

'He isn't used to sleeping on peacocks' feathers,' exclaimed another.

'Mr. Chairman, I appeal to you for protection against this interruption,' proceeded the speaker, a fussy little man named Elkins, who, I heard, was, prior to the days of his adversity, a member of the Vestry Board, by the other members of which he was voted the greatest nuisance in the parish.

'Order, gentlemen, *if* you please,' sounded the authoritative voice of the Chairman.

'I was about to observe,' said Mr. Elkins, 'that my bed is not fit for a civilised human being to sleep on.'

'Them paycocks' feathers have mighty long quills, and no more down on 'em than there is nap on Mr. Elkins' ould hat he's so fond of brushing.'

'Silence, *Captain* O'Flaherty!' shouted the Chairman, 'and do not interrupt the speaker. We shall be

happy to hear your voice later on, and I shall call on you for "Paddy O'Rourke" when the harmony commences.'

'Shure, sor, I wouldn't disturb the harmony of the mayting for the wor-rold; but this is about the tinth toime Mr. Elkins has troubled us with his grumblings about a straw bid. Faith, I think it's a bad conscience has more to do with disturbing his slumbers than the lack of either feathers or horsehair in his mattress. Here, step forward, Tom Nokes, ye spalpeen, and say why ye don't give Mr. Elkins a dacent bid. If we have any more of his botheration complaints I'll just propose yer bid warden no longer, and that little Elkins himself shall take yer office. Would that plase ye, sir?' (turning to and addressing the complaining member of the ward,) 'Ye can try every bag of straw in the dirty prison, and maybe we shouldn't be plagued with any more of yer motions.'

Mr. Elkins subsided before the attack of what he was pleased to call 'the precious Irish Brigade;' and no other business being before the meeting, the Chairman bid the Steward's mate open the ward door and invite the gentlemen of the Honourable Ludgate Ward to join us in our harmonic meeting.

About a dozen Ludgateites came in, bringing in their own bottles, jugs, and glasses; and so soon as they had settled down into vacant seats at the tables, the learned Chairman sounded again with his hammer and declared the meeting opened.

'Gentlemen, I will, as usual,' said he, 'do my best to promote the harmony of the meeting and give you my old song.'

In a good bold voice he sang a song much in vogue in those days, the 'Standard Bearer.'

All were smoking, and nearly everyone had beer, either in bottle or jug, before him; while one or two, without any attempt at concealment, were brewing whisky-punch. Where the whisky came from, was always a mystery to me; but there were a few men, and particularly in the Ludgate Ward, who were always well supplied with it—too well sometimes for the peace and quietness of the ward.

'Now, Captain O'Flaherty, I call on you for a song,' said the Chairman, after he had refreshed himself on the conclusion of his own stave, which had been vigorously applauded by everyone in the room.

'"Paddy O'Rourke!"' cried out several voices.

'"Tim Flanagan's Wake!"' cried others.

'Oh, Captain, do give us "Molly Bawn,"' said Jerry Hales, the cook of the Ludgate Ward, who was one of the characters of the place, as I very soon discovered.

'"Molly Bawn!"' shouted several; and on silence being secured, the Captain, rising from his seat on the form and sitting on the end of his table, with his face towards the middle of the room, broke forth into this well-known exquisite melody, which he rendered in the most beautiful style I ever heard it given in. A voice naturally rich was rendered more effective by the soul and pathos thrown into the song. The uproar at its conclusion was deafening, and, in compliance with the reiterated encores, he suddenly sprang into the middle of the floor and commenced a rollicking Irish song—such a one as Charles Lever would have given to Mickey Free. It was all about the way in which Paddy O'Rourke cheated the priest into giving him absolution for kissing the holy man's pretty servant-wench. His

really excellent voice, and his inimitable drollery of expression and action as he finished off each verse with an Irish shout and a jump in the air, rendered his performance most amusing, and quite equal to anything I have ever seen on a stage, and far, far superior to what is usually received at music halls with rapturous applause. Later on in the evening he gave us, in answer to my inquiry as to whether he knew it, Lever's 'Widow Malone' in a way that Fred Power himself might have envied.

After the Captain's 'Paddy O'Rourke' there was a cry for 'Norton!' 'Norton!' and consequently the Chairman called on Mr. Norton to favour the company with his 'recitations and imitations of great actors and orators.' Mr. Norton was a journeyman tailor, six feet high, with black curls almost ringlets, a thin, haggard, cadaverous look, strong democratic proclivities, and a deeply impressed idea that his natural vocation was a combination of the actor and poet. Only the ignorance of unappreciative audiences, who had witnessed and failed to encourage two or three several attempts he had made to portray Shakspeare at some one or other of the minor theatres in the East and South of London, had prevented him rising to his proper sphere, a rival of Phelps and G. V. Brooke. Devotion to Thespis and inattention to the shopboard had brought him to Giltspur Ward, and long before the performance he inflicted upon us was half over I bitterly regretted he had not been more fortunate in some path of life that would have taken him far away from us. Others were not of my way of thinking; and by many his mouthings and vapourings, his stridings, stampings, and posturing were

regarded as the acme of genius and applauded as such; while others, who well knew the man's inordinate vanity, extravagantly applauded his performance and poked fun at him at the same time. When at last it did end many were the invitations to drink that he received; and, judging from the way he moved from table to table accepting the invitations, I concluded one need not seek far for another cause of this man's non-success in life besides his devotion to politics, poetry, and the drama.

'Mr. Chairman, will you call upon one of our new members to favour us with a song?' said a dandified young man, whose light-coloured sealskin waistcoat exactly matched his well-trained and elaborately curled whiskers, and who I had heard several times addressed as Mr. Burke, 'Miss Burke,' and 'Fitz-Polly.'

I soon found that the Knights of the White Cross paid but scant respect to each other, and familiarity seemed the order of the day. It was useless to object to it so long as it did not trench upon positive rudeness; and those who did kick against it were always in hot water, and were made a dead set at by such as considered the fact of everyone being a debtor alike, levelled all distinctions and made 'one man as good as another.' Any little peculiarity about a man was instantly seized upon by some one in the ward, and in many cases was turned to account in concocting a *sobriquet* by which the victim very soon became known.

Mr. Fitzmaurice Burke, a young gentleman of good Irish family, who had failed in limiting his expenses to his income, was an exquisite of somewhat feminine appearance; hence his being called 'Miss Burke,' 'Polly,' and 'Fitz-Polly.' His appeal to the Chairman imme-

diately brought that worthy on his legs; and as one of the new members and the nearest to him, I was the first called upon for 'a song or recitation;' but nature has denied me the gift of a musical voice, and my last recitation took place at a breaking-up party at school, the subject even of which I had long, long ago forgotten. I was fain to proclaim my inability and beg to be excused.

The Chairman's call upon the next new member was more fortunate. He was a gentleman of somewhat flashy appearance, who, my *vis-à-vis* at table informed us, was a 'bagman doing town for a Wood Street house'—this I subsequently discovered meant, that he was a town traveller for one of the wholesale Manchester warehouses in that street.

Mr. Hopkins needed not to be asked a second time, and after clearing his throat and glancing round the room with a look that meant to convey, 'Now, gentlemen, I'll give you something worth listening to,' he broke forth in quite a Sims Reevian or Harrisonian style into 'Good-bye, Sweetheart, good-bye.' His song was very fairly sung, and was received with unbounded approval; but the man's too evident conceit in the possession of a passably fair voice tended greatly to detract from the pleasure of listening to him. I fear, however, this is not either a rare or singular fault with amateur tenors.

On Mr. Hopkins begging to be excused singing another song in answer to the cries of 'Encore!' several voices called loudly for Stokes and 'Mad Tom;' and on the Chairman saying that the company would be much pleased to hear Mr. Stokes's celebrated song of 'Mad Tom' that gentleman stepped forward from his seat

and took his stand under one of the gas-lights in the middle of the ward.

'Now for a bit of fun,' whispered my communicative *vis-à-vis*, a Mr. Barker. 'Take notice of Stokes; he's quite a character.'

I did take notice of him, and afterwards learned all his history. Rather tall and somewhat awkward in his movements and appearance, but scrupulously clean in person and dress, Mr. Stokes gave one the idea of being a dandified costermonger with puritanical proclivities. His dark hair was brushed as smooth as possible, and was so highly oiled that it might have been varnished; and the curls flattened on each side of the face over the equally well-trained whiskers, which were of the old military style known as 'mutton-chops,' tended to make more prominent a large, straight nose. His eyes were full and soft. His mouth, like his nose, was large, and contained a remarkably white set of even teeth—so even that I half suspected they must be false. His face was shaved as clean as a razor could scrape it, except where adorned by the whiskers. He wore a collar and cravat of the old school, the former being quite stiff, and coming well up on each cheek, giving his head the appearance of being hung on the collar by his ears and whiskers. The cravat was a check cotton of many colours, one of the sort known as Madras handkerchiefs, starched stiff, at least four inches broad, going twice round the neck and tied in front in a neat little bow; and his white shirt was adorned with a very small old-fashioned mourning brooch. Mr. Stokes was very proud of his 'linen,' and told everyone with great pride that his mother both made it and got it up. He

wore a velveteen coat and vest of the gamekeeper cut, and a pair of drab smalls and gaiters that had evidently been made for some livery-servant. This costume was surmounted by a dark fur cap with a shiny leather peak. His demeanour was a burlesque attempt to be very genteel, as was also his conversation. He had the entire Peerage at his finger ends, and knew the town addresses of the whole of the aristocracy and upper ten. By profession he was a dealer in kitchen stuff and all the odds-and-ends that the cooks and other servants in high life consider their perquisites. When a younger man (Tom Stokes was five-and-forty at least when I saw him first), and before the law prohibiting the use of canine quadrupeds as beasts of draught was passed, he drove round to his customers in a small cart resplendent with green paint picked out with vermilion, highly ornamented with brass and drawn by two dogs. He always regretted having to part with his very spicy turnout, and never quite reconciled himself to going his morning rounds in a pony-cart. He knew every cook and footman around Berkeley Square and Mayfair, and had his regular list of morning calls for each day in the week when he waited upon his clients, purchasing what grease and other stuff they had to dispose of and taking it away in his cart. Stokes was a single man, and in his way a gay Lothario. It was for the damages and costs in an action for breach of promise brought against him by some fair nymph of the spit and rolling-pin, that he was detained in Whitecross, and which report said he could, but would not pay. During his enforced absence his old mother—of whom he was very fond and proud—tried to carry on the business, but not with very

great success; for, as Tom said, 'She don't know how to deal with the "ladies" as I do, and aint up to their ways and likins.' By 'ladies' Stokes meant, of course, the 'belles' of the kitchen.

Stokes stood up to give forth his great song of 'Mad Tom,' which, previously to his coming to Giltspur Ward, had, no doubt, greatly delighted many a servants' hall and select bar-parlour, for he executed it in very creditable style—much after the manner of the late Mr. Henry Russell in the 'Maniac,' making quite a performance of it, and laying great stress upon one particular line about a 'pentateuch of tenses,' a combination of words that no doubt equally delighted and puzzled his quasi-aristocratic audiences of Mayfair.

His song was received with vociferous applause, seasoned with shouts of 'Bravo, Tom!' 'Well done, *Fat*!' which latter somewhat rude allusion to his profession in the outer world Stokes received with great resentment. For, turning to one man who was more prominent than the others, and varied his shouts with 'First-rate, Grease!' he told him not to make a 'blaggiard' of himself.

Stokes prepared to resent these too personal allusions; but the Chairman, rising to his feet, called the parties to order; and requesting Mr. Stokes to resume his seat and not disturb the harmony of the evening, he asked a gentleman whom he addressed by the name of Hatch, and who was the Chairman of the Ludgate Ward, if any of the members of his ward who were musical would oblige the meeting with a song or recitation.

Then immediately arose cries from various parts

of the room for different Ludgateites who were known to be good singers, and among the rest several voices called for a certain 'Joe Hawkins' to give them 'Lord Bateman,' 'The Cariboo Chief,' or 'Sam Hall;' upon hearing which Mr. Elkins rose to his feet, and, addressing the Chairman, said:

'Mr. Chairman, I must protest against Mr. Hawkins or anyone else singing "Sam Hall" or any other of his lewd and blasphemous songs. It is an insult to gentlemen to ask them to listen to such——'

Here the speaker's voice was drowned by the uproar of at least twenty persons shouting out at once, some calling for 'Sam Hall' and other songs long since banished from assemblages of decent men, but which at that time were received at Evans's and other music halls. Some, on the contrary, supported Mr. Elkins, and more than one stated their intention to leave the room and retire to the sleeping wards if any such songs were given.

'Gentlemen,' shouted the Ludgate Chairman, 'I crave your silence and attention for one moment. I am exceedingly sorry there should be any disturbance this evening, and that any of the members of our ward should be the indirect cause of it. After all, it is only a matter of taste about some of our friend Hawkins's songs, and some men are more straitlaced and particular than others.' (Cries of 'No! no!' 'Sam Hall!' 'Go it, Hawkins; never mind the psalm-singers!') 'But I dare say my friend Joe, who has a large repetoire, and, I am happy to say, sings an excellent song,' continued Hatch; 'I dare say my friend Joseph will give the company a song that will please everyone

and no one can find fault with. Will you not, Mr. Hawkins?'

'Mr. Hawkins knows several very good songs,' said our own Chairman, 'which possess the advantage of being comic without being coarse; and we shall be delighted if he will at once favour us.'

After a few moments the Ludgate songster commenced, and gave 'My Lord Tom Noddy' in very good style; and on being encored he sang one of his own compositions, to the tone of the 'King of the Cannibal Islands,' in which the whole ward joined in chorus. Now and then between the verses he would indulge in mock orations, in one of which he stated that 'the population of London may be divided into three classes: those who *have been* in Whitecross Street or the Queen's Bench; those who *are now* in one or the other of those habitations of the embarrassed and the temporarily impecunious; and those who have *yet to come*.' This was received with loud approval by all except one elderly man, who, rising to his feet, 'begged to assure the meeting he was not there from any pecuniary embarrassment or debt of any kind, but because he could not comply with an impossible order of the Court of Chancery.'

'Then God help ye,' said Captain O'Flaherty, 'for ye'll just have to die here and be buried alongside of the pump.'

'And that I will do, rather than comply with such an unjust and arbitrary order as the Great Inquisition of Chancery has made against me,' replied the old gentleman, in a loud voice.

'D—— the Chancery Court and all other Courts,

and go on with the song,' cried out a voice; and the Chairman, punishing the table with his hammer of office, as he always did on rising, addressed the victim of the High Court:

'Pray, Mr. Green, do not interrupt the harmony of the evening by one of your orations on Chancery. We all know your grievance, and sympathise with you; and those who are not fully acquainted with it will be so, I dare say, before many days, and you will have ample opportunity of giving them the fullest particulars.'

'Yes, yes, I will,' said Mr. Green, both soothed and rejoiced at the idea of having new-comers to whom he could relate the long chapter of his wrongs.

'Oh, he can get out if he likes,' said a member of the Ludgate Ward. 'He has only to give an account of the trust-money that is sticking to his fingers and let the widow and orphans have their due.'

'I beg to assure you, sir,' replied the Chancery *détenu*, 'it is nothing of the kind. I have long since handed over all I have ever received, and would do so twice over, if that would satisfy the wretches in authority; but the Lord Chancellor wants what I can't give.'

'Won't, you mean,' called out one of the interrupters.

During a lull in the noise, at the conclusion of the last verse, I could just catch the sound of the Cripple gate chimes playing 'Home, Sweet Home,' and heard the lock of the gate on the other side of the yard sound as if the bolt were shot back, followed by footsteps of one of the turnkeys, who, without coming into

our room, proceeded up the stone staircase and unlocked the various bed wards. Others heard this too; and several, both Giltspurites and Ludgateites, made preparations for retiring for the night. The latter went into their own ward, and the Giltspurs gathered up such things as they wished to take up stairs with them, and one by one departed.

The Chairman, at the first sound of the 'key,' called upon the bed wardens to go up and prepare; and these officials did so, going up to light the gas and get ready the beds for the new-comers. There was yet nearly three-quarters of an hour before it was absolutely necessary to move, and the 'harmony' went on, but not with the same spirit as before nine o'clock; whether it was that the sounds of the chimes playing 'Home, Sweet Home,' cast a dulness on those who heard them, or that they were getting tired of the *forced* hilarity—for forced it, no doubt, was with many of those whose thoughts must have been more or less with dear ones at home.

The company gradually thinned, till only about twenty remained on the entrance of the head turnkey, who on entering turned off one of the gas-lights as a hint.

'Now, gentlemen's sons,' said he, 'I am going to put out the gas,' turning off another as he did so; while those who had retained their seats to this moment now hurriedly collected what they wanted to take up stairs.

'Do not leave anything down here,' said the Chairman to me. 'Take them up, and bring down in the morning what you want. The County Court men come here early in the morning and clean the ward.'

'And, like many other honest men, they take nothing away with them they can't lift,' said the good-humoured official, turning off the last burner, and following us upstairs.

On turning into the sleeping apartment I counted twenty-six beds, exactly similar to those in the Receiving Wards—low iron stump bedsteads. The Chairman pointed out to me the one I was to occupy, which, I found, was provided with sheets, in accordance with my expressed wish when I arranged ward fees and other matters on my first coming down from the Receiving Ward. I had not then had experience of rough bush-life, and did not relish lying in a bed without the usual linen or cotton appliances. No sooner were we all in the room than the turnkey, saying 'Good night, gentlemen's sons,' locked the door and departed

Several were already in bed when we entered the room. Others made no apparent preparation for turning in, but were engaged in some mysterious arrangements which, at a quarter past ten, when the gas was turned off from below, I saw were to place bed-rugs in front of some of the windows, so as to prevent the reflection of the candles, they now lighted, from being seen from the Governor's and other officials' rooms on the other side of the yard. As soon as the screens were rigged a couple of the beds were arranged and packs of cards produced. I was invited to join at either loo or 'Van John'—another name for *vingt-et-un*. I declined at first, and contented myself with looking on. The play was moderate, being only for pence, and was conducted with fairness; but I afterwards heard that more than one member of our ward depended

for his support while in prison entirely on what he could make out of card-playing. Of course this was a gross infringement of the rules; but on non-harmonic evenings it was pretty openly carried on in the Day Wards every evening after tea.

The noise made by the yard-gate was always quite sufficient notice to clear the tables of every vestige of cards or anything else contrary to the rules and regulations of the place.

The next day, so soon as ten o'clock struck and visitors were admitted, the ward became anything but a quiet or comfortable residence; indeed at twelve, when the men from the Peacock arrived at the grated window through which they supplied beer, the place assumed very much the appearance of a tap-room; while the groups at the various tables, mostly talking in loud voices, and the clouds of tobacco-smoke—not all emanating from the pure Cuban or Virginian weed—greatly assisted the illusion. After one or two ineffectual attempts to find a quiet resting-place indoors I essayed to try my luck in the yards, and sallied forth to explore them.

In the inner yard, with which I was already pretty well acquainted through the barred windows of Mr. Russell's receiving room, I noticed a crowd round a grated aperture adjoining the place where the beer was being served, and on drawing near to see what it was found it to be a sort of chandler's shop, known among certain classes as a 'Tom-and-Jerry,' or huckster's shop, where a man and his wife—known as Evans and Mrs. Evans—sold such things as the Knights of the White Cross did not have supplied by their friends. Evans

would also go errands for people, and was the privileged messenger of the place. He it was who went to the Sheriff's offices to search for detainers when anyone obtained his discharge. Had he been a steady man, no doubt he could have made a very fair living; but Evans was a sad dog, and often got drunk—so often that it sometimes became an inconvenience to those who sent him on their errands; and but for the Governor's feelings of compassion towards his wife and family—for Mrs. Evans regularly every year added another item to the metropolitan population—he would have been deprived of his position and speedily sent to the right-about.

In this yard were the windows looking into the County Court and Remand Wards, and through them I could see the inmates. Some of these used to converse with the members of the Ludgate and Giltspur Wards. They had only the privilege of having visitors in to see them once a week, instead of every day, and their life was to a great extent very monotonous and dull.

The Chairman of the ward was Peter Crystal, who spent many years in this place, and who after succeeding to the position of Steward of the Receiving Ward, on old Mr. Russell obtaining his discharge, in which office he became a well-known character—quite, indeed, a celebrity of Whitecross—died there, respected by many persons whose hard fate had brought them to sit at his *table d'hôte*.

I tried several times to go inside the County Ward, as there were two pictures painted on the plaster of the walls which report attributed to the brush of George

Morland, but of the truth of this I cannot vouch. That George was poor and at one time in monetary trouble, there is no doubt; that his troubles necessitated his graduating at the College of Whitecross is very possible; but that he ever adorned the walls of that institution with the paintings is somewhat problematical.[5]

From the inner yard I strolled into the outer and larger one, which was only divided from the public thoroughfare—Redcross Street—by a high brick wall. In this several persons were trying to play racquets; but as the yard was paved with flagstones, and very unevenly done, anything like good play was utterly impossible. After the many days' confinement in Mr. Russell's department it was quite refreshing to walk about in the open air, even though my walk was very limited, and view confined to brick walls and barred windows all round and the fleeting clouds above. I became convinced that man is not an animal adapted to being caged with impunity. It is bad enough on shipboard, where the ever-changing elements afford both excitement and variety, but a London prison is but one step removed from a living tomb. After such exercise as a man who can do his sixteen to twenty miles a day comfortably could get in so limited a space, I re-entered the ward, which was now pretty full, and looked round in vain for a vacant seat.

The Steward and his assistants were busy in preparing dinner, and several of the caterers of the various private messes were similarly engaged; while a number of individual debtors were deep in culinary mysteries of all sorts, from the toasting of the succulent and

economical but somewhat pungent bloater, to the artistic and delicate manipulation of an *omelette soufflé* by a Frenchman, M. Drouet, a most agreeable and entertaining fellow, from whom I obtained a good deal of information in the way of making up piquant little dishes out of mere trifles, which I afterwards turned to good account in bush-life.

The atmosphere of the crowded ward, what with the compound savoury fumes of baking, frying, and stewing; the preparation of a plentiful supply of onions with which one party were about to 'smother' a large dish of beefsteaks; and the dense smoke of tobacco of all sorts, from 'publicans' cigars' to the rankest of common shag, was very far from inviting one to remain indoors; but being inclined to study this new phase of life, and at last finding a spare seat at the Chairman's table, I sat down quietly to contemplate all that was going on.

At the next table was the Hon. Mr. De B——, busily engaged in making pastry, at the same time carrying on an animated conversation in German with a young Austrian Pole who had come in to visit him.

Count H. J——, with whom I afterwards became rather intimate, was the scion of a noble family, and had held a commission in the Austrian army. At Vienna he had formed the acquaintance of De B——, and, on his obtaining leave of absence, the two had started together for Homburg, with the view of enriching themselves at the expense of the gaming-house bank. This they intended to do by carrying out together some *infallible* system that had been imparted in confidence to De B—— by a friend who had made a

grand *coup* by it. Such, however, was not the result in their case. Both were cleaned out and lost all they had. Count H. had to await remittances before he could get away on his homeward journey. These did not arrive as speedily as he wished; his leave expired and still he was at Homburg; and when at last a supply of the *viaticum* did come, he feared returning and facing the terrible consequences of his broken leave. So instead of turning towards Vienna, he listened to the delusive wiles of De B—— and accompanied him to Paris, and thence to London, abandoning his prospects of commanding the armies of the Kaiser King, and became what I saw him—a man about town in London, supplementing a very small allowance, made by his family, by painting a little in oils in military and horsey subjects, which he disposed of to frame-making picture-dealers; and by a good deal of the skilful exercise of the billiard-cue, with which he was a proficient. A most agreeable fellow was Count H., and a gentleman withal. He ever bewailed his having left the Austrian service, where a brilliant career had been before him, but cared not to return and face the inevitable Court-martial and its probable sentence of death. There he was, not yet five-and-twenty, to all intents and purposes a ruined man—ruined by one mad act of folly. I endeavoured to persuade him to try his fortunes in Australia, but the life there had but few attractions for him. His aspirations were military; and, waiting some favourable opportunity for entering a foreign service, he passed his time either in London or Paris in the way I have stated.

At one of the opposite tables was a group that

greatly interested me. It consisted of a young man, with his wife and her mother, to whom a swell-looking lawyer's clerk was explaining the way in which his accounts had been made up in order to comply with the rules and forms of the Insolvent Court, before which tribunal the young fellow was to appear on the morrow.

He was suffering from a very severe fit of what was known as 'schedule fever;' that is to say, he was dreadfully 'funking' his interview with the terrible Commissioner. His own accounts had been kept in a very simple and primitive manner; but now that they were twisted and turned about and regularly 'cooked' by the lawyer to make them fit into the prescribed forms of the Court, he utterly failed to recognise them as relating in the remotest degree to his own affairs. His wife appeared to have a much clearer insight into them than he had, and was bewailing the fact that she would not be permitted instead of her husband to answer the pertinent and confusing questions which it was expected the opposing counsel would ask. The knotty point appeared to be, how to give a satisfactory account of some rather problematical loan said to have been advanced by the wife's father, for which a bill of sale had been given. Under this the latter had taken possession of all the furniture and household goods—in fact, all the young people possessed—greatly to the detriment and annoyance of the creditors, who had a pretty shrewd suspicion that the whole matter of loan and bill of sale was a 'bogus' affair altogether, got up between the insolvent and his father-in-law merely to deprive, not to say defraud, them of what little there might be arising out of such effects. They, rather

naturally, objected to it, and some of them were going to try and sift the affair at the insolvent's 'hearing.' He did not at all relish the prospect of the examination and cross-examination that he knew were in store for him the next day; and, in spite of the assurance of the limb of the law that his 'governor' had secured both the leading counsel, so that the opposition must either put up with having a junior or else bring in an 'outside man' from some other Court, not up to the ways and dodges of Portugal Street, he could not master the confidence his friends wished to inspire him with. As all talked pretty loudly I could not help hearing the conversation, and I was greatly struck by a remark of the clerk's:

'The worst is it's such a tin-pot sum after all—the whole lot don't make seven hundred pounds. If it had been as many "thous" it would have been thought respectable, and most likely have shut up the opposition at starting.'

So I concluded that it was easier and more respectable to be whitewashed for a large amount of indebtedness than for a small one. Thus it is in all things: the wholesale trader, styling himself a merchant, is regarded as greatly superior in social status and everything else to the retail dealer in the same commodities—the mere shopkeeper. The wretch who commits a single murder or merely slays his two or three victims, is looked upon with horror and condemned to hanging amid the execrations of the community; but the leader of an army who carries wholesale slaughter and rapine throughout the length and breadth of a neighbouring land, receives the plaudits of the whole world as a hero. The little

shopkeeper who, having been unfortunate in his trading, has to seek protection from the Courts, receives but the contemptuous pity due to a 'poor devil' who has 'made a mess' of it. The bankrupt banker or contractor, whose failure is for hundreds of thousands, and whose fall brings havoc and ruin to scores of others, is regarded almost with veneration by all the officials of the Court, and is treated with wondrous civility by the legal gentlemen concerned in the case; whilst the insolvent spendthrift (particularly if he be a 'swell,' the scion of a noble family, or a popular public character), who is under the painful necessity of bringing a long course of extravagance and folly to a wind-up and termination in one of the Courts in Portugal Street; whose schedule consists of a long list of debts, headed by jewellers, tailors, and wine merchants, all down for an amount for luxuries supplied, that would in each case have been a respectable income; and finished off by two or three bill-discounters and money-lenders, Jews, Gentiles, and men of no particular religion at all—receives equal homage, and people crowd to catch a glimpse of him, as if he were a hero. He receives from the Court the discharge he condescends to ask for, as a matter of course, and in some instances it has actually been accompanied with the compliments or the witticisms of the learned Commissioner.

Let the reader turn to the back numbers of 'Punch,' twenty or five-and-twenty years ago, when that journal in its palmy days was the leader of wit and comicality, giving the whole country its weekly pabulum of laughter, causing its appearance on the Wednesday morning to be looked forward to as one of the special

events of the week, and he will there find most racy descriptions of the proceedings of the late Mr. Commissioner Fane and his *confrères* of the Bankruptcy and Insolvent Benches, and of their interviews with distinguished debtors. The appearances of the late Mr. Charles Mathews at his then almost periodical examinations before the Courts, were looked forward to with even more anxiety than his assumption of a fresh *rôle* in a new comedy; and the little triangular duels of wit that took place on those frequent occasions between the talented insolvent in the box and the learned Commissioner, supported by the gentlemen of the long robe, were scenes to be remembered. Nothing on the stage was ever equal to them. Those who were present when the distinguished comedian described to the Court how he was locked up by Lawrence Levi and liberated by his brother, will never forget it. Mr. Mathews was the only person in Court whose sides were not aching with laughter. On another occasion, when Mr. Commissioner Law, on asking why Mr. Mathews had kept a brougham instead of riding to and fro between the theatre and his private residence, was told by 'Mr. Affable Hawk' that he did it 'from the purest motives of economy; he really could not afford cabs.'

'I should have thought cabs more economical than a private carriage,' said the Commissioner.

'Not at all,' was the prompt reply; 'cabs take all my ready money, a scarce and precious article, to be carefully treasured, and only parted with under absolute necessity; but a brougham I can always hire on credit.'

When another well-known character, the late Bill

Crofts, landlord of the Bull's Head Tavern, in Windmill Street, Haymarket (a house much frequented by noble and fashionable sporting men thirty or five-and-thirty years ago), appeared in the Court for the eighth or ninth time, Commissioner Phillips, in granting his almost unopposed discharge, said, 'Mr. Crofts, you are getting quite a wholesale dealer in insolvency,' as though the thing were altogether a joke.

While watching the group I have described at the opposite table, my attention was suddenly called in another direction by a loud shouting and huzzaing in the yard. 'Burnside's all right!' called out a little man named Canute, running into the ward to tell the news. 'He has got his discharge, and Master Tommy's beaten again. Bravo!'

The fact of 'Tommy' being beaten seemed to afford the most intense satisfaction to all who heard the news.

The Hebrew race, I know, have the credit or discredit of being the hardest and sharpest of creditors; but, from the experience I gained while in Whitecross and the Bench, I have come to the conclusion that they are much belied, and that the palm for hard-hearted severity, deceit, extortion, and chicanery must be awarded to those professing our own creed. The sons of Abraham are sharp enough and hard enough in all conscience; but there are some seeds of mercy and compassion among the very worst of them, and some that I could name have done acts of genuine charity and kindness to the families of the victims of their usurious rates of interest. A Jew is as sharp as sharp can be. He drives the very hardest of bargains, and is hard, very hard to beat in a negotiation; but when the bargain is

once struck and agreed on, and the Jew has given his word, it can generally be taken, and relied upon. I wish I could say the same for the Christian discounter. The majority of those nests of iniquity, those dens of robbers called Loan Societies, the doings of which occasionally are brought to light in our Courts of Law, are owned and conducted by Christians, and no worse fate need be wished to anyone than to get into their clutches.

CHAPTER III.

THE PRISON CHARITIES.

On two large black boards affixed to the walls of the inner yard, was painted a list of certain charitable persons who had bequeathed money to be applied to the relief and benefit of poor debtors. These charities were of various kinds, and some of them were associated with names more or less noted in civic or national history. Some of them provided funds out of which the legal expenses of poor debtors, with little or no means of defraying the necessary costs of passing through the Court, were paid on application to the Governor of the prison, who was the ostensible almoner. Others enabled the same functionary to assist debtors, who had obtained their discharge from the Insolvent Court, with gifts of a few pounds on their leaving the Hospice of Whitecross, to give them a fresh start on the journey of life. Another fund was available under certain circumstances and conditions for those who could arrange terms for effecting a compromise with their detaining creditors to accept a sum not exceeding twenty pounds in full discharge of their claims. One of the conditions was, that the recipient should have no other debts but those for which he was arrested and detained, so that on being discharged he should be really a free man.

Several of the charities bestowed their bounties in the shape of small periodical gifts of money to debtors who were either freemen and liverymen of the City of London or belonged to certain trades. Christmas and other festive seasons were generally the times at which these gifts were distributed.

A bequest of the celebrated mistress of Charles the Second, Nell Gwynne, to the poor debtors was distributed at certain times in the shape of bread.[6] One day two officials of the 'Cross' entered the ward, followed by several persons carrying large bakers' trays piled up with penny loaves, which, the bequest stated, were to be of the 'finest quality of bread,' and so they were. The number of debtors on the roll of the ward was counted, and the loaves divided equally among them all. No matter how many or how few *détenus* there might be, the same number of little loaves of fair white bread always came. On the occasion of my residence in the Hospice of the Whitecross, each man received seven loaves and a half as his share. Other bequests—two in particular, at Christmas and New Year's Day—took the shape of beef, several pounds, varying from seven or eight to twenty, being distributed to each debtor. At certain other periods, such as Lord Mayor's Day and Christmas, the Civic King and the Sheriffs presented everyone with a pint of ale.

One bequest interested me greatly. The late Alderman Birch, who had amassed a fortune at the well-known old-fashioned confectioner's shop in Cornhill, opposite the Bank of England and the Duke of Wellington's statue—a shop celebrated for the excellence of its soups, and well known to everyone visiting London—desired that every week the contents of the 'stock-pots,' in

which the foundation for his various soups was made, and which consisted of well-stewed calves' heads, beef, game, and all sorts of good meats, should be taken down to 'Whitecross' and distributed to the county or poor debtors detained within its walls. Each man who wished it, was supplied with one or more basinsful of the 'stock;' and any that was over, after supplying the County men, was sold at one penny a basin to such of the debtors in the other wards as were willing to purchase it, the Ludgate and Giltspur, being City wards, having the first offer of supply.

Many availed themselves of this means of procuring a cheap dinner; and on Wednesday evening, when the cry at the gate was heard of 'Hot oh!' great was the rush of men, jug or basin in hand, desirous of benefiting by the alderman's bequest. I have several times tasted 'Birch's stock,' and in various ways. Plain as it is poured out of the gigantic cans in which it is brought from Cornhill, with the addition of pepper and salt it is a very palatable 'stew;' cold, and turned out in a stiff jelly, it eats like brawn, or what is known in some parts of England, Lincolnshire in particular, as 'pork cheese.' In the hands of anyone with a little knowledge of the culinary art, it formed the basis of a good curry or hash; while when treated by such *artistes* as the Hon. Mr. De B—— or M. Drouet, the French gentleman I have mentioned before, it became a dish of so exquisite a daintiness as to banish present surroundings of whitewashed walls from those partaking of it, and carry them in imagination far from the sound of the chimes of St. Giles of Cripplegate to some quiet table in the bay-window of the Star and Garter.

CHAPTER IV.

RESIDENTS AT BURDEN'S HOTEL.

Among the residents at 'Burden's Hotel' were men of all sorts and all positions in life; and I was frequently not a little amused in contemplating the characters of several of my comrades in trouble. Some took their adversity philosophically, and put up with the disagreeables and roughs of the place with a good grace; others, on the contrary, magnified every little inconvenience and made it a great trouble.

One of the latter class, a Mr. William Bridler, was always airing his troubles to everyone who would lend an attentive ear; and what with misfortunes, real and fancied, together with his inordinate vanity, he afforded no end of amusement to many besides myself.

Bridler was certainly a fine-looking fellow, standing six feet one in his slippers; and, but for a supercilious and conceited expression of face that occasionally assumed a martyr-like look of dignified and unmerited suffering, he might have been considered 'not bad-looking.' In his own estimation he was a perfect Adonis; and one day he seriously told a circle of attentive listeners, that his figure and manly appearance had so attracted the notice and admiration of Prince Albert, that his Royal Highness had *indirectly* offered him a commission in the Life Guards, if he would only

have consented to adorn that splendid regiment with his presence. Little Fred Whiffin, a young gentleman who was ever on the look-out for some one to chaff and poke his fun at, and who was consequently the *bête noire* of Bridler, used to say the real version of it was that a recruiting sergeant at Westminster, spying out 'our long friend,' and thinking he would well become the jack-boots and cuirass of the 'heavies,' had tried it on to get him to take the Queen's shilling and enlist. Whiffin's version, I expect, was not far wrong.

However it might be, Bridler assumed airs enough for the Colonel of the regiment, and his walk to and fro in the yard was a very correct copy of the stalwart heroes one sees pacing backwards and forwards between the Clock Tower of the Horse Guards and the sentry-boxes where the mounted warriors sit statue-like on their horses looking out upon Whitehall, apparently quite indifferent to the admiring gaze of the country cousins, nursemaids, and street Arabs who stand staring at them with wonder and approval.

Mr. Bridler's aspirations were not, however, of a military turn, but strictly commercial. By profession he was a civil engineer, and he was as careful to adorn his signature with the letters C.E. a little below and somewhat to the right hand of the terminal letter of his name, as any newly elected member of the House of Commons is to add the mystic M.P. The particular branch of civil engineering to which Mr. Bridler devoted his attention was that of mining. Unfortunately he did not confine his operations to the shafts and levels of the various mines he was connected with, but busied himself considerably in the operation of

promoting the companies necessary to work them. These, however, did not always turn out quite so brilliant as a perusal of the prospectuses and 'Captain's reports' would lead one to suppose they should do; and the consequences were that he was one of the frequent visitors to Whitecross—as his tormentor Whiffin expressed it, he was in and out of 'quod' like a Jack-in-the-box.

The cause of his present visit was the very natural consequence of having endorsed certain bills that had been 'melted' for the purpose of providing funds to 'float' a company for working a mine in some out-of-the-way spot in Wales with an unpronounceable name, the shares of which would one day be so many fortunes to those who could 'hold on' and not throw them on the market. But as every one of the promoters, though deeply impressed with the brilliant prospects of the mine *when* the lode would be cut, were in the position, as Mr. Whiffin expressed it, of 'fully qualified members of the H.U.C., or Hard Up Club,' each had hastened to sell his shares for what they would fetch—an operation which considerably depressed their commercial value on the Stock Exchange. Mr. Bridler's own account of his operations in bills of exchange was somewhat confusing to anyone not thoroughly versed in such matters; but Mr. Fred Whiffin was generally present when Bridler treated us to a narrative of his commercial transactions, and in his own facetious way explained matters so that our less experienced minds could understand them.

According to Whiffin's interpretation Mr. Bridler, far from being the commercial genius he would lead one to suppose, was the tool of others who formed a

clique, or, as our American cousins term it, 'ring,' whose business it was to find mines, form companies to work them, sell as many shares as possible, and then 'get out of it.' To effect all this, much stamped paper was used. Sometimes Mr. W. Bridler, C.E., was the acceptor of the bills, acting the part of what Whiffin called 'drawing-post;' *i.e.* he was the 'post' upon which his friends 'drew' at three or six months' date; in other cases he figured as the drawer, or simply as endorser. This Mr. Whiffen described as 'getting up behind.'

Occasionally, not only was Bridler sued and arrested, but the other parties who had joined him were served so too; and on the occasion of one of his sojourns beneath the chimes of Cripplegate, Bridler spent a fortnight messing at the same table and in company with the two friends who had accepted and endorsed the 'bit of stiff' (another of Mr. Whiffin's peculiar cognomens for a bill of exchange) for which he was detained.

The most amusing thing about this man was the gravity with which he would endeavour to persuade his hearers that, but for the blind stupidity of those who would not give him unlimited credit, and would insist in periodically locking him up, he would be a perfect millionaire. His several arrests always came at most unfortunate times—just at a moment when he was about to make fabulous sums. He took me on one side and assured me that had he been at liberty the last three days of the previous week—Thursday, Friday, and Saturday—and *if he could have had an open credit* with a reliable stockbroker, he would have 'netted' five-and-twenty thousand at the very least.

I was naturally astonished at such a statement, and expressed my sympathy at his hard fate, following my remarks of condolence with a request for a more explicit explanation as to *how* he could have realised such a nice little sum, and *why* he could not have transacted the business by correspondence or through the instrumentality of some of his commercial friends. In reply to my queries Mr. Bridler drew from his pocket a paper on which was a tabular statement. This, he explained, was a list of the highest and lowest prices at which 'Consols' (the 'sweet by sample Three per Cents.,' Sydney Smith termed them) had been dealt in on the Stock Exchange during the last week. These figures he had copied from the Money article of the 'Times.' He then proceeded with the most earnest gravity to explain to me that *if* he had been at liberty, and *if* he had been able to get a broker to act for him to the extent he wished, and *if* that broker had made purchases at the *lowest* price at which Consols were quoted before the rise took place, and *if* the broker had sold out again at the *highest* figure, the profit, after paying the broker his commission, would have been the handsome amount of 15,000*l.* Then, pointing out that after the rise a reaction had taken place in the Consols market in consequence of the news that had caused the rise not turning out to be so good as first reported, he assured me with, if possible, increased earnestness that *if* that difficult-to-be-found and confiding broker had continued to operate in accordance with his, Mr. Bridler's, directions—'and which of course, my dear sir, with a profit due to me of 15,000*l.* in his hands he would have had no hesitation in doing—and have sold a "bear" of so

many thousands of Stock at the *top* of the market, I should, sir, have been able to purchase back the Stock yesterday at the *lowest* market price, and so made another 10,000*l.* I saw it as clear as the noonday sun, sir; but I cannot get anyone to act for me to the extent I require; they all ask me for "cover;" that is, my dear sir, they want me to deposit money in their hands before opening an account for me.'

I ventured to suggest that perhaps it would not be difficult to induce a stockbroker to act for him to a small extent; and that as he seemed so very confident of success, no doubt when the broker saw the result was satisfactory, his confidence would increase and he would act on a larger scale.

'No, sir; were I to do so, the broker would soon see my theory and act for himself instead of for me. I must act for large amounts or not at all. It is not worth my while to speculate in milk-scores and trifles. My plan is to make a *coup*.'

'The *coup*,' remarked Mr. Whiffin, who had heard the last few words the great speculator addressed to me, 'is generally made, not by our long friend William, but by the Sheriff's officer, when he *coups* him gently on the shoulder and bids him come to these comfortable lodgings, where coals, gas, and pump-water are supplied free-gratis-all-for-nothing, and no rent or taxes to pay.'

Whiffin was the bane of Bridler's life at Whitecross, and was perpetually chaffing him. He knew the commercial Adonis in the busy outer world, and, being acquainted with many of his proceedings, was often able to give a quiet rub upon a sore point. One of the principal promoters in the various mining schemes

Bridler was engaged in, was a man named Loring, who acted as financier-in-chief, and got the stamped paper of the parties 'melted.' Except on the sole occasion I have named, Mr. Loring so arranged with the discounters or 'melters' that they were satisfied with locking up only Mr. Bridler; though their solicitors invariably insisted on suing all parties, for the sake of their costs. This Bridler regarded as somewhat unfair, and he consequently sometimes was inclined to rebel, and grumbled greatly both at and to Mr. Loring.

Why or wherefore I never knew, but one of Whiffin's pet names for his 'long friend' was 'Loring's Ramrod,' which the latter greatly resented, though he did so in a quiet, dignified way.

Another 'term of endearment,' as his little torment called it, that he applied to Mr. Bridler, was 'Bull's Eye,' on account of his always having a glass fixed in his right eye after the manner of dandies affecting shortsightedness. One day, shortly before I removed to the Queen's Bench, and while I was making up my mind to go there, I asked Bridler why he would not do the same, and go where he could have peace and quietness; but before he had time to say a word Fred Whiffin, who was standing with us in the group smoking in the yard, replied for him.

'What's the use of his doing that? It would be a sheer waste of money. He will be out in a week's time, and before three months are over be back again. If Bull's Eye is to go over to the Bench every time he gets quodded, he had better make a bargain for a dozen *habeas corpuses* at the wholesale price, and always have one ready for use in his pocket against Rutland or

Hildyard * have orders to bring him back here. No; I have some idea of going there myself, and you must not be surprised if you find me following your example and ordering a *habeas* for my own *corpus*.'

Mr. Whiffin did so; and within a week of my transferring myself from Whitecross to the Bench the little man arrived, and soon became as well known there as he had been at 'Burden's Hotel,' and very little fun or mischief went on without Fred Whiffin being engaged in it.

Another singular character was a man named Joseph Laurie. He was an old Cantab, and had graduated at one of the aristocratic colleges, where he had formed a large circle of acquaintances among the 'swells.' In his younger days he had been a great favourite, and many of his old chums kept up a correspondence with him. What had been the cause of his getting into trouble and Whitecross I never knew. He was an uncommunicative man, and said very little about himself. I learned, however, that within the last few years he had been a member of the Giltspur Ward, for a few weeks at a spell, several times, and had always pursued the same course each visit. No sooner was he arrested than he notified the fact by post to a number of his 'well-to-do' friends of early days, and many of them replied as he wished them to do, sympathising with his misfortune and enclosing bank-notes and cheques. If no reply came in due course, a second letter was sent, but not by post this time. Mrs. Laurie—

* Rutland and Hildyard were the two principal 'Sergeants-at-Mace'—the officers who perform the part of Sheriff's officers within the limits of the City of London.

a meek and patient woman, who came to him every morning and quietly took her departure when he bade her—was always the bearer of the second application, if the party were in town or anywhere within a short journey by rail. Clubs, chambers, banks, barracks, and offices, as well as rectories, were visited by this lady with the letters from her husband to one or other of his early friends requesting their aid. I believe that the first two or three times he had been arrested, he received considerable sums from these sources. Whiffin said Whitecross was like a gold-mine to him, and that he made more money inside than outside its walls.

When I saw him there, the novelty of his applications had somewhat worn off, and his old acquaintances did not always respond as he desired; and, judging from some animated little scenes that took place between him and his patient partner in life, I concluded that many of her journeys were but bootless errands.

Whether he purposely came to a debtors' prison in order to have a better plea for begging of his friends I know not, but the writing and despatching of his *ad misericordiam* appeals seemed to be the sole business of his life, together with the enjoyment of the proceeds, for he lived on the best of everything himself. How his wife and family lived at home, I, of course, had no opportunity of judging; though the fact that he invariably sent Mrs. Laurie away before his own dinner-time made me a little suspicious as to his unselfishness.

CHAPTER V.

THE LAST DAYS IN WHITECROSS.

When first I had arrived at Whitecross I heard a good deal about the Bench and the comforts to be obtained there; and after passing some weeks in the Giltspur Ward, and finding that my late friend and solicitor Mr. Harrison's affairs would still be some time in getting so far settled as to allow of my own matters progressing, I began to make certain inquiries as to what the Bench really was, and how I could get transferred thereto. I was quite determined not to place myself under any obligation to relative or friend for help to pay Messrs. Happs & Camp, knowing full well that in a few months, perhaps weeks, I must have means of my own to do so; and even were I freed from their arrest I really could do nothing towards going out to New South Wales till the whole of the matters connected with my uncle's will were settled and I was in possession of my property. So I determined to turn a deaf ear to all their alluring offers for arrangement, and to remain in the care of the Sheriffs of London and Middlesex till the good time did arrive.

I had means in my possession ample for my comfortable support for some months, if necessary, with a due regard to economy. But having had quite enough

of the 'tap-room' life of Whitecross, which had lately become additionally distasteful through the advent into our Giltspur Ward of two or three men of a decidedly 'rowdy' calibre, I determined to set to work at once and get removed from the custody of the Sheriffs in the City, to that of Her Majesty at her royal establishment of the Bench, in Surrey.

No sooner had I expressed my determination than a score of offers were made to procure me a writ of *habeas corpus*,' by means of which my removal must be effected. Declining all such offers, I wrote to the solicitor who was now trying to get old Harrison's affairs into straight order; and the next morning, as soon as the doors were opened, his managing clerk waited upon me. Directly my wishes were made known, he promised to have all ready for my journey on the following day.

That night, like the one of my first entry into the society of the Giltspur division of the White Cross Knights, was a committee and harmonic meeting night; and when it became known (which it very speedily did) that I was about to leave and go over to the Bench, I received several hints that it would be very well received if I would stand treat for a certain amount of beer or spirits, 'if it would run to it,' towards making the festivities of the evening pass off with *éclat*. I consulted the Chairman as to how I should manage such a thing without bringing on myself any danger of transgressing the rules of the place. He called in the assistance of the Steward; and Bell immediately set practically to work to count heads and reckon how many pints of beer would be required, and how much 'tape' or whisky it would take to brew grog for the select few who would sit with

me at the Chairman's and the adjoining table. This calculation not being very intricate, and he promising to do all the needful and see that a sufficiency of beverage was supplied, I handed to him the few shillings requisite to defray the expense with a little extra to provide tobacco; upon which I was instantly pronounced by some bystanders to be 'a brick and a half, good weight,' and no mistake. Just at that moment a Spanish-American gentleman, Don Manuel de Alvarado, a native of Venezuela, who was detained on a writ of *ne exeat regno*,[4] came up to the Chairman's table with the information that his difficulties were arranged. His London correspondents had received satisfactory replies to their letters from his agents at Cadiz and had at last agreed to give bail for the large amount for which his person was attached; consequently he would obtain his liberty and leave 'Burden's Hotel' the next day.

Hearing what I had done in the way of standing treat, the Hidalgo, with many most profuse apologies to me, begged to be allowed to have the honour of participating in the pleasure of providing for the entertainment of the gentlemen of the ward. To a very liberal donation of cash Signor Alvarado added about half a hundred of real Spanish cigars, as to the excellent quality of which there was no second opinion, however much doubt there may have been as to there being any record of their importation to be found among the dockets and cockets of Her Majesty's Custom House. Don Manuel de Alvarado was a tall, sallow-complexioned, good-looking specimen of the South American. Certain features of his face betrayed the presence of a dash of

Indian blood in his veins, which a somewhat hot temperament and other indications confirmed. He was nevertheless a courteous, gentlemanly man, and withal a most pleasant companion—one of the very few of the Knights of the White Cross that I felt at all inclined to make companions of.

That year we had an unusually early taste of winter, and before November was half over a heavy fall of snow took place. Few things that I have ever seen have been more amusing than to witness Don Alvarado's delight and astonishment at seeing the thick flakes of snow falling and to examine them in his hand. The shudder he gave, when the first lump of snow was placed in his hand, I shall never forget. On the mountain peaks of the mighty Andes, in his native Venezuela, he had seen snow in the distance, and was well aware of its nature so far as books could tell him; for he was a well-read and well-informed man. But this was his first real acquaintance, close and tangible, with this phenomenon of nature; and no connoisseur ever gloated over some gem of one of the old masters with more enjoyment and curiosity than he did on first catching the snowflakes in his open palm, and then watching them through a powerful glass as they quickly dissolved. While speaking of Don Alvarado I may mention that among my companions in Giltspur there were two other foreigners; for M. Drouet, my kind instructor in the mysteries of the *cuisine*, being only a Frenchman, I don't count him as one of them. Of these Mr. D——, a native of Calcutta, was a very unfavourable sample of the Hindoo brought up in Europe. He had been educated in Paris and London, with the result of engrafting on the natural servile craftiness of his

own race and country, all the vices that could possibly be picked up in these two cities during the few years of his residence first in one and then in the other. Clever he certainly was, and on many points well informed. He had evidently read extensively, the Bible and several standard works of our Christian divines among the rest; but all his ideas seemed perverted, and the result of his theological studies was to make him the bitterest scoffer at all kinds of religious belief I ever met. He spoke English and French well and fluently, and had a good command of language, and the power of very forcibly expressing his ideas in the blandest and smoothest manner possible. Indeed, his whole manner and speech were so soft, so smooth as to be almost slimy. He always spoke of the ruling powers in India with the greatest possible scorn and contempt; and threw out hints of what he and others of his friends who, like him, had been educated in England and France, would do when they returned to their native land. This man impressed me most unfavourably with the effects of Western education upon the Oriental mind; and I only hope he is, as I said, an unfavourable specimen of the educated native to whom it is contemplated to entrust a large share of the administration of our Indian Empire.

The other foreigner was an Armenian, named I——, whom many in London will remember as a very useful man as interpreter; in which capacity he served more than one embassy from the East, and earned a fair income in exchange for his good offices to Turks, Greeks, Persians, and other Orientals visiting either London or Paris. His foibles were play and drink. However deep might be his half-drunken sleep, however heavily his

head might be resting on his arm upon the table, the rattle of dominoes or the flutter of a pack of cards would instantly endue him with life and spirit to enter into the excitement of a game. When sober he was a pleasant and most entertaining fellow; and his knowledge of all parts of the East, from Stamboul to Ispahan, was so extensive that his conversation was always extremely entertaining and amusing. Later, on one of my visits home from the colony, I learned from a medical friend to whom I had introduced I—— after his liberation from Whitecross and my own from the Bench, that the Gin Spirit had claimed his own at last; and that this master of half the languages, not only of Europe but of Asia too, had died in a fit of *delirium tremens* in one of our large public hospitals.

At last the evening came—my last evening beneath the tower and chimes of Cripplegate Church. Visitors and strangers had all been rung out. The late dinners and the Steward's tea-table were all cleared. By special request these meals had been hurried forward, in order that the proceedings of the evening might be commenced an hour earlier. Order was restored, the accounts of the ward were read and passed. Each table being furnished with a jug of beer and glasses and a goodly supply of tobacco, and the Don's cigars having been passed round, the festivities of the evening set in, with an earnest determination on the part of everyone to forget all about trouble and distress at home—to banish all recollections of creditors, debts, bumbailiffs, Insolvent Courts, and Commissioners till next day. All who could sing did so; and a great many who could not tried to and broke down. Success or failure mattered little—the

applause that greeted the one was vigorous in the extreme; and the laughter with which the other was received had about it a good-humoured ring that gave no offence, and all passed off very merrily.

Bell had been an honest Steward so far as regards laying in a plentiful supply of drinkables with the cash provided by myself and the Spaniard; the latter, indeed, I strongly suspect, must have afterwards augmented his gift, judging from the frequency with which the Steward's men replenished the jugs at the various tables. Towards nine o'clock it was very evident that the potency of the Peacock's tap was working upon several of the weak heads of the company; for disputes, carried on in more or less incoherent tones, were to be heard at several tables.

At last M——, the spouting tailor, staggered rather than walked into the middle of the room, and inflicted upon the company what he was pleased to call his imitations of great actors. As he was making his way back to the table some one, hearing the church clock chime, called for 'God Save the Queen' to be sung as a wind-up before the officials crossed the yard.

'Down with the Queen and Prince Albert!' cried the tailor, turning quickly round and facing the company. 'It's time such suckers of the people's money were put down. What good are they? Did they ever do any good——'

'Stop, ye rascal!' shouted Captain O'Flaherty, striding down the centre of the floor, and stopping in front of the tailor; 'hould yer tongue this minute; and if ye spake another word against the Queen—God bless her!—I'll twist yer neck, ye foul-mouthed spalpeen.'

Saying which he laid his hand upon the democrat's shoulder.

'Leave the man alone, you Irish bully,' called out a voice at a table behind the Captain. 'M—— is quite right. What the devil is the use of a lot of idle brutes fattening on the labour of the working man?'

'It's precious little your labour has helped to fatten anyone, Mr. Welter,' said a valorous little man named Wrench. 'As betting at horse-races isn't taxed, and you gentlemen welshers never stay long enough to pay your losses, let alone taxes, it's little enough the Queen costs you.'

'I say kings and queens and all aristocrats are locusts and thieves,' recommenced M——; for the Captain had let go his hold and turned round on hearing Wrench's voice.

'Bravo! so say I!' shouted Welter, the betting-man.

'Now, look here, all of ye,' exclaimed the Irish Captain. 'I have had the glorious honour of wearing her blessed Majesty's uniform and holding her commission, and if I hear one man of ye spake another word, aye, half a word, against her, I'll either make short work of him or he shall of me. Mr. Chairman, let us all sing "God Save the Queen," as that gentleman in the gig-lamps'—alluding to the spectacles of the original proposer of the singing of the National Anthem—'suggested; and if either of these idle, dirty rascals—this Mr. M——, the spouter, and this swell mob, three-card, betting sharper, Mr. Welter, who, let me tell him, should be in a rale prison, and not here at all—if they don't both sing it, as all good Irishmen and Englishmen too should sing it, I'll just knock their two heads together.'

The sound of the 'gate,' the signal that the turnkeys were coming and bedtime had arrived, was heard. Everyone sprang up, and nearly the whole company began singing 'God Save the Queen.' Welter, instead of singing, whistled in the loud, shrill manner familiar to the frequenter of theatres at holiday-time. O'Flaherty, catching the sound of the betting-man's shrill whistle, turned fiercely round, and, striding up to the man, seized him by the collar, shouting at the top of his voice all the while the words of the anthem. No sooner had he turned towards Welter, than M——, now unmistakably drunk, seizing a couple of jugs, one in each hand, mounted first the form and then the table. Flourishing them over his head, he ran from one table to another, stepping on the forms between; and on reaching the place where the Captain was standing with his back towards the table, and still holding Welter by the collar, he dashed down first one jug and then the other on to the Captain's head with such force as not only to shiver them to pieces but to cause him to lose his own balance and pitch head-foremost on to the ground below, where he lay stunned and motionless.

O'Flaherty received the full force of the two jugs right on the top of his head, which was cut severely with the blows. Welter, seeing the diversion his ally was making in his favour, followed up M——'s attack by a blow with his fist in the Captain's face, and made a desperate struggle to free himself from the vice-like grip of his opponent. His effort, however, was in vain. The gallant Irishman, dazed for a moment by the two blows from the rear and the one in the face, staggered for an instant, but without relaxing his hold. Wiping

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the blood, which was now streaming down his face, out of his eyes with the disengaged hand, he uttered a wild, unearthly Irish 'Hirrhoo!' that might have been the battle-cry of his Celtic ancestors at Clontarf, seized the luckless welsher by the waist, lifted him from the ground right over his head, and before the two turnkeys who had now entered, and several others who rushed forward, could prevent it, hurled him with the force of a giant into the fireplace.

Jerry Hales, the cook, had promised himself a hot footbath on going to bed that night, and a large oval wooden tub was under the boiler-tap being filled for him to take up stairs. Fortunately for Mr. Welter the fire had not received any fresh fuel since the commencement of the harmonic meeting, and consequently the water had gone off the boil; but it was still sufficiently hot to make it exceedingly unpleasant for the poor wretch, who, when hurled by the Irishman, fell in a sitting posture into Jerry Hales's bath. The roar he gave was something to remember; and in his haste to liberate himself from his impromptu hip-bath, he seized hold of the first thing he could clutch, and that being unfortunately the top bar of the still hot grate, he burned his hand rather badly. He was soon lifted up; and his frantic efforts to hold his saturated and steaming nether garments from the parts he had so unvoluntarily bathed were so truly ludicrous, and his cries assumed so dolorous a tone, that, and in spite of the appearance of Captain O'Flaherty, whose face was now covered with blood, no one could resist laughing. Officials and 'gentlemen's sons' one and all roared again for a few seconds; but it was soon apparent to all

that both parties required medical aid, and steps were at once taken to remove them to the Infirmary, to be attended to; and in the meanwhile the alarm was given, and some one sent to fetch the Doctor.

When the first commotion was over and all parties had moved from the fireplace to the door of the ward, it was found there was a third patient requiring attention. In the scrimmage between O'Flaherty and Welter, the originator of the whole *fracas*—the democratic spouting tailor—had vanished both out of sight and out of mind; and it was not till everyone in the ward in passing to and fro to the fireplace had twice trampled over his prostrate body, and he was at last found still lying insensible on the ground, with a jug-handle firmly clutched in each hand, that anyone gave him a thought. To raise him up and lay him on the table, unloosen his clothes, which bore ample evidence of many feet having trampled over him, and dash a plentiful supply of cold water over his face, was the work of a few moments, and an operation that was speedily rewarded with signs of success and returning animation. He, too, was removed across the yard and taken to the Infirmary —a room precisely similar to and exactly over the Day Receiving Ward. At last what appeared something like a little order was restored. The officials looked round and counted their charges, and once again the 'gentlemen's sons' were invited to ascend the stone staircase and betake themselves to their 'peacocks' feather' beds.

In the Chairman's room, where I slept, we were all pretty quiet, that worthy having shown great discrimination in the selection of those who would sleep there; but from the first going up the most unearthly noises

proceeded from the room over our heads. To enable the reader to thoroughly understand what took place on that memorable night, I must explain that the two upper floors had no iron bars to the windows, all of which looked into the inner or pump yard. The windows of the rooms on the first floor were all so protected by thick bars of iron, some three or four inches apart, that no article of any size could possibly be passed or thrown out.

In spite of the noise above, all in our room undressed and got into bed. No one was in any humour for cards; and consequently when, at a quarter to ten, the gas was turned off, it left us all in darkness, or with only such light as the moon above and the gas-lamp in the yard below, which latter was kept alight all night, afforded us.

I lay down vexed with myself, as having been, in treating the ward conjointly with Don Alvarado, the indirect cause of the turmoil that had ensued. I soon, however, found some palliative to excuse myself in my own conscience, and my thoughts turned to the fact that it was my last night in 'Burden's Hotel,' and the last on which I should be troubled by hearing 'those chimes so softly stealing.' The hated sound just then breaking forth, followed by the striking of ten o'clock, made me more anxious for the morning to come that was to take me to the Bench, where I understood I should have the luxury—and luxury indeed it appeared in anticipation after these long weeks of barrack and tap-room life—of a room to myself, where I could really be alone, and could choose my companions—a thing utterly impossible in Whitecross.

The din overhead still continued; but in spite of it I had fallen off into a state of half-reverie, when our Chairman sprang from his bed and rushed to the window, exclaiming, 'Good God! One of those mad, drunken fools has thrown himself out of the window!'

In an instant everyone who was awake jumped out of bed and ran to the windows; for we all knew that nothing but death could result from a fall on to the flags of the yard from such a height. Before we could reach the windows a whole shower of crockery fell from the rooms overhead, making an indescribable noise as each utensil smashed into atoms on the stones below. On looking into the yard below, we saw that what the Chairman had seen fall from above was one of the straw beds. The shouts above grew louder; and now, the noise of the earthenware shower having attracted the attention of the other wards, every window was occupied, and the inmates of other rooms imitated the example and hurled their crockery out of window. These were followed by more beds, pillows, and even blankets. A few stools came next; and by the time a considerable heap, or rather several heaps, were piled up in the yard, we heard a louder shout than usual from the top room above, and a sudden light appeared. We were not long in doubt as to its cause. A straw bed, one side ripped open and in flames, was thrown from the window, almost scorching our faces as it passed. It was well aimed, and fell in such a way as to form a connecting link between the two largest heaps of beds. The sight of the flames as they spread from heap to heap seemed to have a maddening effect upon all the other wards, for out of every window beds were hurled to feed the blazing

fire. The officials were now fully aroused; the flames having mounted up illumined the whole place, and the alarm of fire was given all around the prison. We could hear the shouts of the people in the streets and the clatter of the fire-engines as they arrived. Presently the doors of our room were opened, and in rushed a crowd of officials, firemen, and police. One glance showed that not one bed had been moved from its place in our ward.

'Gentlemen,' said the Governor, who was in a dreadful state of trepidation, 'gentlemen, I am glad you have not participated in this most disgraceful affair. Pray do not be alarmed.' He saw that most of us were dressing ourselves, and some were packing their bags and portmanteaux.

'There is no danger—not the slightest,' observed a tall, military-looking man, who, I afterwards heard, was one of the inspectors of the Fire Brigade. 'The fire in the yard will soon burn itself out, and there is nothing the flames can extend to.'

At that moment one of the officials entered, and, going up to the Governor, spoke to him in a low voice. 'All right, all right. Mr. Constable tells me they are all secured up stairs, and policemen are in the ward to prevent further disturbance.' Then, turning to our Chairman and addressing him, he said, 'Can you account for these extraordinary proceedings, Mr. Wells—first of all, the fighting in the ward below, and now this affair?'

'In no other way, sir, than that several of the men were more or less the worse for drink,' replied the Chairman.

'Drink! yes, and as long as there is the possibility of getting such unlimited supplies of drink in here the prison will always be the Pandemonium it is.'

This speech was made by a little, consequential man, whose topcoat but ill-concealed his evening attire beneath; and whose white tie and diamond stud told plainly he had been to some festive scene. He was Alderman Y—— Z——, and had been feasting at the Goldsmiths' Hall, and, passing in his carriage on his way home when the alarm of fire was given, had come to see what was the matter, and to give his aldermanic and magisterial assistance if required.

The fire burnt itself out; Alderman, Governor, officials, and police took their departure from our room; and, talking over all the events of the evening and night, we one by one dropped off to sleep just as the autumn daylight was breaking. I snatched a few brief hours of unsatisfactory slumber—for sleep it hardly was—and on the bell ringing for turning out at the usual hour I rose and dressed myself for the last time in the Hospice of the Knights of the White Cross, packed my portmanteau and dressing-bag, and descended the stairs with one in each hand, prepared for my journey to the Queen's Bench, on the arrival of that much-vaunted palladium of free-born Britons, the writ of *habeas corpus*.

CHAPTER VI.

MOVING BY 'HABEAS.'

On reaching the ward below, very small was the party for breakfast. All the inmates of the upper sleeping-rooms were in durance waiting the impending magisterial investigation.

I was not sorry when I was summoned to the Governor's office and informed that the expected writ of *habeas corpus*, or '*habeas*' as it was for brevity sake called, had arrived, and that the officer who had arrested me was waiting to take me to Chancery Lane and hand me over to the custody of one of the officials of Her Majesty's Court of Queen's Bench.

This official, I found, was called a tipstaff. The legal ceremony of transferring a debtor or other *détenu* from the care and custody of the Sheriffs of London and Middlesex to that of Her Majesty by writ of *habeas corpus* was a somewhat curious affair, and, like a good many legal ceremonies, not unmixed with fiction. I believe the wording of the writ says that the party to be transferred is to be brought into the presence of one of Her Majesty's Judges—the Judge sitting in Chambers; but this part of it is pure legal fiction, no such appearance before the Judge taking place.

My old captor and his uncanny Hebrew follower, each giving me a nod of recognition, and inquiring with great *empressement* after the state of my health, asked if I would not like a cab. Of course I would, not having any wish for a public promenade in such company. We drove to the lower end of Chancery Lane and alighted at an old-fashioned public-house, under the sign of the Mitre, near the Temple Bar end of the street, and opposite the entrance to Rolls Gardens and Judges' Chambers. This house has long since been pulled down and rebuilt as an elaborately-fitted refreshment-bar and restaurant, still retaining the old name.

My custodians ushered me into a dingy back parlour, upstairs, where I was informed that I was at perfect liberty to call for anything I liked to pay for, either for myself or for them. Here the Sheriff's officer left me in the care of his man, while he attended before the Judge or his clerk to obtain his Lordship's signature—a ceremony that, judging from the time of his absence, was very intricate, for he did not return for some three hours, by which time I was heartily sick of the dingy room, the unsavoury bum-bailiff's man, and the 'Morning Advertiser,' which I read through. I was falling back on the advertisements, when the door opened and in walked the Sheriff's officer, accompanied by a good-natured, rather burly, thick-set man, whom he introduced to me as Mr. Husted, the tipstaff of the Queen's Bench, who now had me in his keeping.

Husted was quite a different sort of man to the Sheriff's official. There was a blunt, honest brusqueness

about him totally unlike the shy, suspicious manner of the other. Old George, as he was called—to distinguish him from his son, Young George, also a tipstaff of the Queen's Bench—had nothing to do with catching and arresting debtors. His branch of the profession needed no lying and manœuvring; no sailing under false colours or other acts of deception to obtain admittance to men's houses to seize their goods and chattels, their Lares and Penates; no practising of all sorts of schemes and dodges to ascertain whether Mr. Smith or Captain Brown was *at home*, and to obtain admittance to his presence, in order that he might tap him on the shoulder and escort him to Cursitor Street, Bream's Buildings, or Whitecross Street. George's duties were plain and straightforward, and he performed them in an honest and courteous manner. A gentleman debtor was handed to him for escort to the Queen's Prison. In his pocket he held the Judge's *mandamus* for so doing. The debtor might be his prisoner—of course in a legal sense he was so—but it would be no act of George Husted's that would rudely remind him of the fact. Not only did his tipstaffian duties comprise the conveying of debtors from the custody of the Sheriff to their new apartments in the Queen's Hotel, Southwark, but whenever any of the inmates of that place had to attend any of the Law Courts, from that of the Lord Chancellor himself to the Insolvent Court, either Old George or one of his brother tipstaffs or tipstaves—which is it?—formed his unobtrusive escort to show him the way *and to see that he did not lose himself.*

'When shall you be ready, sir?' asked Husted. 'I have to go over to the Judge's office and get the *habeas* exchanged, and then I am at your service, sir. You have all you want,' he continued, addressing Mr. Sloman's deputy, and handing him a paper that, I suppose, was a receipt for the due delivery of my body into his safe keeping.[7]

After George had partaken of 'refreshment,' we started to walk over to Southwark—or the Borough, as it is more generally called—where the Queen's Prison or 'Bench' is situated. It is wonderful what vast capabilities the officials of George Husted's *species* have at all times and opportunities for partaking of refreshment. Is there any authentic record to be found of a gentleman of this class ever having declined an invitation to 'refresh' himself?

By the time the transfer of my 'corpus' was duly completed and my new custodian had refreshed himself sufficiently at my expense, it was close upon five o'clock, by which hour, in November, the shades of night had sufficiently closed on the great city to banish all my fears of any chance acquaintance recognising me in the streets; so I determined to perform our short journey on foot, having committed my traps to the custody of a man, for whose fidelity Husted stood sponsor, to carry them to my new residence.

We walked along Fleet Street and over Blackfriars Bridge. I was desirous of learning as much as possible of the place I was going to, and found my companion very willing to give me every information in his power, and he also took care to let me know that he let out furniture on hire. Every man confined in the

Bench has a room to himself, which, unless he be on what is termed the 'County side,' he has to furnish at his own expense. This he is at liberty to do in any way or style to suit his own means and taste. Some gentlemen had furniture of their own, and others hired it from parties who let it out. Husted and several of the other tipstaffs and turnkeys of the prison, made a profitable investment of their savings by supplying furniture and all requisites to gentlemen debtors. Thinking I could not do better, and having had at Whitecross a hint from Fred Whiffin that it was a good thing to 'make things square' with either one of the head turnkeys or the tipstaff in order to get a good room, I engaged him to provide me with everything to make my new domicile comfortable, in consideration of a weekly sum of ten shillings. After I had been there about two months this sum was reduced to seven-and-sixpence. A part of his bargain was that he would manage to secure me a front room overlooking the racquet courts.

Turning out of the Blackfriars Road, and through some back streets, we at last arrived at 'No. 1, Belvedere Place, Southwark,'[8] which Husted informed me was the address to have all my letters sent to. Passing through a small gate in a high wall, we left the public street behind us and emerged into a quiet open space, with a road between two high brick walls, which, running round two sides of the prison, leads into the Borough Road. On our left were the Governor's or Keeper's (Captain Hudson) and the Deputy-Governor's (Lieutenant Ibbitson) houses and the offices connected with the establishment. Both the Governor and his deputy were retired officers of the

Royal Navy. Crossing the road from the little gate, and passing the fronts of the two houses, we directed our steps towards the entrance-lodge, the door of which, at the top of a flight of stone steps, was open. The hall into which this door opened was brilliantly lighted, and gas reflectors threw a bright light on the faces of everyone entering or leaving the lodge. Two stalwart turnkeys were on duty; and though they appeared to take but little notice of the parties who were passing in and out, they were quite on the alert that no one but visitors passed *out*. All sorts of people were going to and fro, and those who carried parcels were subject to a slight examination. A notice-board *requested* all 'ladies' to raise their veils on passing the gates. This was strictly attended to; and if any of the softer sex neglected to do this, however slight and gossamer-like her 'yashmak' might be, the turnkey requested her to lift it. This precaution and the bright glare of light thrown on the face of every person passing the wicket, rendered the probability of any prisoner making an escape in female attire infinitesimally small. Husted in a very few words informed the officer in charge that I was a new 'lodger,' though the very fact of my arrival in his company no doubt proclaimed it. The bearer of my luggage arriving, I was asked if I had anything prohibited by the rules, and on replying in the negative the man was ordered to take it into the further lodge and leave it. The turnkeys had a good look at me in a quiet and unobtrusive way, and no doubt my portrait was well photographed upon their memories. Husted, who had gone into another room, came out accompanied by a short, stout old man with

a white neckcloth, and dressed in untidy black, like a Dissenting minister or an undertaker. His silver-rimmed spectacles apparently increased the size of his large eyes, one of which had a decided obliquity in an outward direction. His hat was stuck on the back of his head, and had received no attention from a brush since the date of its purchase. From one hand hung a large bunch of keys, and in the other he held the official paper brought by Husted and relating to my safe custody. This was 'Old Colwell,' the head turnkey, three of whose sons held official positions under him.

'We will put you in the Receiving Ward for to-night, where Mrs. Newbon will make you comfortable; and in the morning, after you have seen Captain Hudson, I will give you a room. You will please not to go out of the Receiving Ward till the morning, and make yourself acquainted with the rules.' And uttering a sound between a gasp and a grunt, apparently drawn forth by the exertion of so long a speech, he waddled rather than walked into his little room again, dangling and jangling his keys as he went.

I heard him give some directions to some one inside, and immediately a tall man, with big bushy black whiskers, good teeth, a slightly Jewish nose and cast of features, bright eyes, and a pleasant smile, came out and asked me to follow him. This was John Colwell, the son and deputy of the old man who had just left us.

Leaving the entrance-lodge by a door at the opposite corner to that at which I had entered, I descended some steps into a stone-paved square yard, with large carriage-gates at each end, and crossed to another, the

inner lodge, lighted up as brightly as the outer one. Here a stiff, good-humoured-looking turnkey mounted guard; the cut of whose whiskers, slightly tinged with iron grey, and whose well set up though rather stout figure, seemed to proclaim the fact of his having 'served with the colours' previous to being a Bench turnkey.

The prim old soldier had a pleasant smile and a cheery word for everyone passing in and out. On two gentlemen entering the lodge at the door leading on to the Parade, he 'stood to attention' and gave 'salute' in response to the 'Good night, Newbon,' of the elder of the two, whose erect figure, well-bronzed, handsome features, and white moustache needed not the 'Good night, Colonel,' of the turnkey in reply to tell the bystander that he saw one of our Indian heroes, who was a frequent visitor to the Bench, where he came to see an old brother officer, a *détenu* in the 'State House.'

On their passing out John Colwell addressed Newbon:

'Here is a gentleman for the inner room of the Receiving Ward. Do you know if it is all ready, and when Mrs. Newbon will be in?'

'She is there now, sir, doing it.'

Just at that moment a bell rang in the lodge, on hearing which John Colwell immediately closed the door leading on to the Parade; and on a very flashy-looking 'lady,' (?) accompanied by an equally flashy and horsey-looking man, entering the lodge, Newbon closed the other door with a snap.

'What have you in that bag, marm?' said the old soldier in a very decided but civil manner. 'Please to let me examine it.'

'Oh, it's only a bottle of wine I'm a-taking in to my friend Mr. Andrews,' she replied, reluctantly yielding the reticule she carried to Newbon, who held out his hand for it in a way that meant 'I must look for myself.'

'You know very well, madam,' said John Colwell, stepping forward and receiving the wine from the turnkey as he drew it from the bag and then looked in and turned over the contents for a closer examination, 'you know very well this is not the way to bring in wine. It must be left here; and if Mr. Andrews applies for it to-morrow in the proper way he can get it.'

In answer to some private signal, Mrs. Newbon had come out of the Receiving Ward, and on John Colwell opening the door, she entered by it. 'I must trouble you, madam, to go with this person, who will search you.'

'What for?' exclaimed the 'lady,' bridling up with a show of resistance. 'I've nothing about me improper.'

'I am very sorry, madam, but I must request you to go with Mrs. Newbon, who will not detain you many minutes.' Then, seeing the lady showed signs of non-compliance, he added, 'I must insist on it. My orders are to have everyone searched who visits Mr. Andrews.'

Seeing there was no help for it, she quietly submitted, and accompanied the female searcher into an inner room. While his wife was examining the lady lest anything of a prohibited nature should be concealed upon her, Newbon proceeded to feel the pockets and take off the hat of the flashy man—much to his disgust and my amusement. John Colwell looked on meanwhile, and, seeing that nothing was found, turned round

to me. 'Some of the gentlemen's friends,' he said, 'will persist in breaking the prison rules and bring in spirits to them, and when we have any suspicion this is how we search them. If you have anyone coming to see you it will be better to tell them never to bring any spirits, or they will not be allowed to come in again; indeed, they are liable to a fine of forty shillings.'

Nothing of a contraband nature was found on either, and they passed in to the Parade-ground, the lady evidently greatly ruffled, and casting a look known as 'daggers' at John Colwell.

'Now, Mrs. Newbon, is all ready for this gentleman? He will be glad to get to his room.'

'Everything's ready, and the fire a-light, sir. Please to come this way.'

I followed the old soldier's wife, and could not but commend his good taste and good luck in choosing and getting so comely a looking helpmate with whom to pass the peaceful and latter part of his life, now that he had laid aside the trappings and arms of war.

Mrs. Newbon was a sprightly, good-looking, black-eyed, buxom woman, some fifteen years the junior of her husband, if not more. She must have been an exceedingly pretty girl, and put me very much in mind of Madame Vestris, though lacking that charming woman's exquisite and unapproachable grace and elegance.

'*Madame*,' as Mrs. Charles Mathews was always called, was then in all her glory. I had not very long before seen her in some character in which she wore a dress of humble life; but *how* she wore it I need hardly say, except that few, *very* few, could wear it like her. Something in Mrs. Newbon's dress, which was ex-

ceedingly neat, in some degree resembled that of 'Madame,' and this greatly aided in the resemblance I fancied I saw between the two.

I followed the old soldier's better half through the door by which I had seen the various visitors pass in and out of the Parade-ground, and found myself in a small passage formed by being railed off from the other and larger portion. A few steps down this passage brought us to a door on the left hand, through which I followed my guide into a small room, passing on our way the entrance of a much larger one that looked like the crypt beneath a church, and containing several iron bedsteads. In what I was told was to be my room for the night, a fire was just burning up; and, casting a look round, I saw in one corner a small barrack-bed prepared for use. In the centre of the room was a small oak table and three wooden chairs, on one of which my luggage was placed. A washstand and a remarkably plain fender, being simply a plate of stout sheet-iron bent in a semicircle, on which rested a poker and fire-shovel, completed the furniture of the room.

On asking if I could be supplied with anything, Mrs. Newbon informed me she would send word *down* to the kitchen. As the room was on the ground floor I hardly knew where she meant; but she replied to my query by saying, 'the Public Kitchen was at the other end of the Parade, at the back of No. 16 staircase.' I restrained any impatience to know where No. 16 or any other staircase might be till such time as I should be able to explore for myself, not doubting I should get thoroughly acquainted with the whole place before I left its walls. After assuring me that the bed was well

aired, as it had been slept in the night before, she withdrew, leaving me for the first time for many weeks really alone.

Now that I was actually in a room by myself the sensation was most strange; and, far from enjoying what I had long thought would have been the luxury of solitude, I instantly felt lonely and in want of some companionship. I looked around the room, and on close examination found that the fireplace was flanked on one side by a cupboard reaching from the floor to the ceiling, and divided into two; and on the other by three slate shelves let into the walls. On the sides of the iron grate, which was evidently very old, were the initials 'G. R.,' surmounted by the crown and 'III.' in Roman numerals beneath. All the furniture was branded with a crown and the initials of British monarchs, from George the Third of blessed memory to that of his grand-daughter, our present beloved sovereign lady, Queen Victoria. On casting my eyes up to the ceiling I found that my room was also of the crypt or cloister style of architecture. The walls were whitewashed; and from each corner of the room, which was about twelve feet square, sprang an arch, all four meeting in the centre of the ceiling. This ceiling or roof was composed of bricks, and being groined, as it was, gave the room a rather dungeon-like appearance; and looking at the massive door, which, as well as all the little woodwork there was about the room and the mantelshelf, was painted black, I recalled to my mind some of the tales of castles and dungeons I had read in my school days, and began to fancy myself in one of the gloomy and mysterious chambers described by the late and ever-to-be-

remembered Mrs. Radcliffe. On turning towards the window I became aware of two shadows on the dingy white blind, for the light of the gas outside more than overpowered the puny illumination afforded by the single composite candle that Mrs. Newbon had left behind her. I heard the sound of voices outside and the footsteps of people passing to and fro. In drawing up the blind I made sufficient noise to be heard by the two men whose shadows I had perceived. They both turned round, stared into the room, and walked away. I stood at the window and gazed into what appeared to me to be an ordinary street, with numbers of people walking about, mostly men, but no carriage traffic. All or nearly all the windows were lighted up, and a row of gas-lamps, exactly similar to those in the public thoroughfares, tended to make the illusion that this was an ordinary street all the stronger. One thing alone reminded me that I was in a prison. The window was protected outside by strong iron bars; but even these were only such as are seen in the basement stories of many private houses in London and other large cities. None of the other windows that I could see had any bars, but all looked like the windows of ordinary houses.

I had not long stood looking out of the window (which I opened) before a gentlemanly old man walked up to the window and addressed me:

'Good evening, sir. Come to take up your residence among us? You will find this quite a world *sui generis*, and on the whole not an unhappy community.'

'I came over here,' I replied, 'on account of the

comparative liberty and comfort I heard was to be obtained here.'

'The liberty, sir, is almost perfect. With the single exception that we may not pass the gate, there is no restriction placed upon our movements. We visit each other when we like, and, as you may suppose, there is society of all sorts to be found here. Before you have been here a week, you will feel yourself at home. Your room is your own domain—your castle; no one ever troubles you or intrudes; and the Governor even, when paying his weekly visits, knocks at your door before seeking admission.'

'That is very different from where I have spent the last four weeks,' was my reply. 'I have lived in a tap-room lately.'

'Ah, you've come from Whitecross Street,' said he. 'You are right; it is a tap-room. This place is a barrack—all officers' quarters, and no drill or duty. A man may well imagine himself in college or barracks here. Have you got a room yet?'

I told him I was to have one in the morning, and that I had arranged to hire furniture from Husted, the tipstaff.

'George does it very well, and will make you comfortable,' said the old gentleman; 'but his charges are high. There are others who will fit you up cheaper than George, but some of them are not so clean.'

'Then they will not suit me at any price,' I said, 'for I care not how plain my crib may be furnished, but it must be clean.'

'Are you a Chancery victim or a debtor, may I ask? If you are likely to stay here long I would advise your

purchasing your own furniture, which you can readily do, as there are several dealers near the prison who will supply you with all you require. Hiring furniture is very expensive, and before you have been here many months you will pay more money than would buy the things outright, and they will always sell when you leave.'

I thanked him for the hint, but said I hoped my stay would not be long enough to make it worth my while to purchase.

'I wish I could say as much,' said he, with a sigh. 'Four years have I been here, and to all appearance I may be here, not four but forty years more. I have the misfortune to be a Chancery prisoner, and God only knows when I shall be free to leave these walls. My name is Kendall, and I have quarters in the State House. You will be all sixes-and-sevens to-morrow morning; and if you will come over to my rooms on the second floor, looking over the racquet-ground, at ten sharp, I shall be happy to see you to breakfast. I would ask you over this evening, but they never allow men to leave the Receiving Ward the first day of coming in.'

I thanked him for his kind invitation, of which, I said, I would avail myself. 'Did I understand you to say rooms? I was not aware anyone had more than one room.'

'In the State House, as a separate building over here is called'—and Mr. Kendall pointed in the direction that was on the other side of the non-barred passage I have spoken of—'the rooms are very large; and some of them—mine being one—are divided into two, which

makes it far more comfortable. When you come over in the morning you shall see for yourself.'

I produced my cigar-case and offered it to Mr. Kendall. It contained some that Alvarado gave me before leaving Whitecross.

'I don't know if you indulge in the bad habit of smoking, but if you do you will find these pretty good. I suppose there is no rule broken in smoking here?' I inquired.

'Thank you, sir,' said Mr. Kendall, taking a cigar. 'Oh, no; you may smoke here as much as you like. Here comes some one for you from Joe Colwell's.'

As he spoke a servant-girl came up to the window and asked me what I wished to have for tea or supper, as Mrs. Newbon had sent down to the Kitchen to say I wanted something.

I ordered a steak and coffee, and off went the girl to get it.

'Did you say Colwell?' I asked of my newly-found friend. 'There seems to be little else but Colwells here. The head turnkey and his deputy——'

'Yes, and two others. Joe has the Kitchen, and a very good thing he makes of it. A young one is an under turnkey, and if there were a dozen more, berths would be found for them all. But they are a very good sort all together, though the old man is a little crusty now and again.'

We continued our conversation for some time till a boy came up to Mr. Kendall.

'Oh, please, sir, you're wanted, sir; Mr. Martin and the General have both been trying your door, and sent me to see if I could find you.'

'I must say good evening, sir,' said the old gentleman. 'Boy, tell General Latour I will be there directly. We have a friendly rubber of whist of an evening, either in my rooms or in Martin's, and now is our time. I hope we shall see you one evening. Good night.' And, raising his hat with the grace of the old school, he departed.

I had closed my window and pulled down the blind, and had knocked the fire together a bit, to make a blaze—for standing at the window had chilled me—when a knock was heard at the door. On bidding the person enter, the waiting-maid from the Kitchen brought in my evening repast, which I sat down to enjoy with the best feelings I could; for now I was alone, I began to worry at my being detained for the foolish act of obliging Charley Watson, and especially not knowing how long it might be before I made my start for the sunny clime of New South Wales.

I had hardly finished before a bell very near my room pealed loudly forth, and continued its clanging for some minutes. The sound of many footsteps on the pavement passing my window was heard; and on drawing the blind on one side, to look out, I saw a great number of persons, many of them women, going past towards the gate; and after most of them had gone, and the residents had seen their friends depart, a man began to shout at the top of his voice, 'Stran—gers—women—children—all—out! Strangers, women, children, all—out—a-l-l—out!'

This was repeated from time to time all down the Parade, at the foot of every staircase, as I found afterwards, when fully acquainted with the place and its ways.

Every now and then a loiterer—mostly of the softer sex—would run past to get out before the closing of the gates.

The gates were closed, all communication with the outer world cut off, till the next morning; the night watchmen—two of whom did duty inside, and kept order for the night—came to take charge, and the other turnkeys and officials departed for their homes.

No restraint was placed upon the inmates, who either walked about the spacious Parade and racquet-grounds or visited their friends in their own rooms with perfect liberty.

Many gay parties were assembled in certain of the rooms, as I could see and hear from my window, and some did not break up till a very late hour. Others seemed to be like the owls: only coming out of their chambers at night, when all the strangers were departed and all was dark; and, pacing up and down the 'Park,' as the large ground forming the three racquet-courts was termed, took their evening constitutional walk. A few walked together or in pairs, chatting and smoking; others, less sociable, and maybe finding sufficient companionship in their own thoughts, paced to and fro alone. These mostly kept in the deep shadow under the lofty wall which, with its surmounting *chevaux de frise* and wire netting—the one to prevent escape of *détenus*, and the other of stray racquet-balls—shut in this little world from the larger one outside. Iron spikes and iron netting were equally ineffective. The two combined did not prevent the gallant Lord Cochrane from climbing over

the wall, aided, as no doubt he was, by some of his brave and fearless tars outside; and the netting, high as it was, was not high enough to stop errant balls from flying over, as I found to my cost when I first essayed to play this glorious game, and had to pay the racquet-master threepence or fourpence each for every one I sent spinning out of bounds, to the equal delight and profit of the boys attending the game, who ecstatically shrieked, 'Ruler, ru-ler!' as ball after ball over-topped the netting, till I learned how to hit them *against* the wall instead of *over* it.

At last, tired of looking out of window, I pulled down the blind; for after Mr. Kendall's departure no one came to enter into conversation, though several rudely came to stare; and, feeling inclined to sleep, I undressed and turned in, thinking of the scene of the previous evening—my last in Whitecross—and looking forward to a new experience with the coming day.

CHAPTER VII.

EXPLORING THE PREMISES.

THE night passed quietly; no blessed (?) chimes of Cripplegate mocked the 'captive on his bed.' Once or twice I heard a distant church clock strike; and when the sound died away without being followed by 'Auld Lang Syne' or the 'Old Hundredth' I turned round to resume my sleep, and dream with the intensest satisfaction.

At eight next morning the gates were opened, and communication with the *free* and outer world commenced. At that hour the place was invaded by a bevy of women of all ages, and all colours too, for two of them—a mother and daughter—were 'darkies' and daughters of Ham. These came in to wait upon, attend upon, clean up for, and generally *do* for those who paid for their attendance. They performed much the same services as the beings termed 'laundresses' do for the bachelor tenants of chambers, and were the domestic servants and slaveys of the gentlemen *détenus*. Many, either from motives of economy or otherwise, dispensed with all such aid, and 'did for themselves,' either entirely, or with the aid of an eccentric character who, like themselves, was a prisoner, and known as 'Corney.' Corney earned a fair living by giving a helping hand in carrying water

up and down, cleaning boots and windows—indeed, making himself generally useful.

Not all the women who came in so early were of the 'laundress' sisterhood. Many of those that hurried past my window were wives, whom the regulations of the place had not allowed to remain with their husbands, but had been turned out with visitors, strangers, children, and other women on the previous night, and who, having risen early in their humble lodgings in some small streets adjacent to the Bench, now came in to wait, in their own way, upon their imprisoned husbands.

Before I was dressed, a knock was heard at my door; and on going to see who it was, I was requested by a tall, dark-eyed, curly-headed turnkey to step into the lodge and see Mr. Colwell. Slipping on a coat, I complied with the request, and there found the preacher-looking old man, who, even at that early hour, was dangling his everlasting keys.

Taking his seat at a small table on which were a book and some papers, he asked me to sign my name in the book. 'I suppose, Mr. Brett, you will keep yourself?' he asked mechanically.

'I suppose I must,' was my reply, 'as I expect no one else will keep me.'

'Oh, yes, sir. If you have no means of support of your own, and your friends will not supply you, there is a provision for you. If you will make a declaration that after all your present debts are paid, you are not worth twenty pounds, you can go on the Poor or County side, and a furnished room will be given you, with a hundredweight of coals, wood, and five shillings a week,

for twelve months. After that period it will be reduced to three shillings and sixpence.'

I listened to the old man, who repeated the enumeration of the bountiful provision of the County allowance, much as the verger of some cathedral does his account of the monuments and other sights to a party of visitors.

'Well, no, I hardly think I can make such a declaration as that,' I said, 'and so must decline your very liberal offer.'

'Then I will give you this key of your room, and you must get into it by this evening.'

'Which is the room?' I inquired.

'It's the one Mr. Husted asked me for last night,' was his reply. 'You will find it pretty clean, as the last tenant did a great deal to it.' Handing me the key, he looked at me over his glasses and waddled off out of the door leading to the outer lodge, his keys dangling and clinking as he moved.

'If you let Husted have the key when he comes in he will get the furniture in,' said the tall turnkey, whose name was Dennis. 'If you let me have the key I will give it to him. Have you engaged anyone to attend on you? If not, you had better see who is disengaged.'

'Can I have Mrs. Newbon, who attended to my room yesterday?' I asked.

'No, sir; she only attends to the Receiving Ward and the Chapel, but she will tell you whom you can have.'

Giving Dennis my key, I was about to leave the lodge, when a tall, shabby man, with spectacles on nose, who looked as if neither comb nor soap had touched his

face or unkempt tawny hair for many a long day, passed in, with a large bundle of newspapers under his arm, followed by a small boy with a similar load.

'Halloa!' I exclaimed, stopping him, 'are those this morning's papers? Can I see one?'

'If you let me know the number of your room and staircase I will supply you with what paper you want every morning. The "Times" for one hour is sixpence a week.'

'Let me have one now.'

'I can't; these are all engaged.'

'Nonsense! surely out of that lot there is one to spare? Give me one, and I will take the "Times" every day.'

Just as he was about to refuse and take his departure another man, with a fur cap, a bright red cotton handkerchief round his neck, and red bleary eyes, to look at which made one uncomfortable, came in, similarly loaded with the morning papers—evidently an opposition newsman, for, without another word, the tall, unkempt, unwashed dispenser of the news of the day withdrew a 'Times' from his bundle and handed it to me.

I took his paper and proceeded to my room to finish dressing and while away the time till I should go over to the State House, in accordance with the invitation of the previous night, to breakfast with Mr. Kendall.

As in glancing through the newspaper I failed to see anything of very great interest, I felt curious to explore my new territory, and sallied out on a voyage of discovery, so as to employ the time till Mr. Kendall's breakfast-hour.

On emerging from the Receiving Ward door I saw the State House right before me—a plain, square brick house, four stories high, detached, with an open door, and through it I could see the stone staircase, on each side of which were the rooms inhabited by the favoured few who were located there. The rooms on the left of the staircase had the advantage of two windows, one looking south over the racquet-courts, and the other east, towards the Receiving Ward, and the small corner room fitted up as a public-house bar, though closed at that early hour of the day. There were two of these, next to each other, one known as the Grapes, with its own cellars beneath, and the other as the Britannia, where beer and wine, brought in, under certain regulations, from a neighbouring tavern of the same name, were sold to the Benchers. Turning the corner, I came full upon the wide expanse of the large open ground comprising the Parade and the Park, with its racquet-grounds, the lofty wall of the prison being divided into three splendid courts—perhaps the very best in the kingdom. Opposite to the wall was the main building, built of brick, and consisting of a row or terrace of some dozen houses, four stories high, every one with a separate stone staircase, facing the open doorway, on each side of which were the Benchers' rooms. In the centre of the terrace was one house larger than the others surmounted with a plain stone pediment. The lower portion, to the height of two stories, was the Chapel, and above it again was the Infirmary. A broad, flagged pavement ran the whole length of the building, with ordinary gas-lamps at intervals, as in the outside streets. At the north and south ends of the terrace

two wings projected westwards. In the northerly one was the Receiving Ward, where I had slept, the two taverns the Grapes and the Britannia; and in the corner a post-office and a small room used occasionally by the officials for paying the County Benchers their weekly allowances and other similar purposes. Over these rooms the whole of the north wing, together with some other buildings at the back, comprised the Remand Ward, where prisoners under punishment from the Insolvent or Bankruptcy Courts were confined. All the windows of this Purgatorial division of the prison were disfigured by strong iron bars, similar to those of the Receiving Ward. The inmates of this place had a separate and smaller yard and racquet ground of their own somewhere at the back. They had no communication with the larger portion of the prison, and were rather restricted in many of the privileges.

Several very noted if not celebrated men have spent long periods in this Remand Ward. One man, who had become known all over England as one of the most persistent of lovers, completed a term of imprisonment and was discharged from it just a little while previous to my arrival at 'Belvedere Place.' Dunn—known as 'Paddy Dunn'—was enamoured of Miss Burdett Coutts (now the Baroness Burdett Coutts), or, most likely, of her enormous wealth; and not taking 'No' for an answer, continued to persecute the lady with his attentions in all manner of ways to such an extent as to become a perfect nuisance and render her life unendurable. After annoying her so for a long time he transgressed the bounds of legality and rendered himself amenable to prosecution. The friends of the persecuted

lady took advantage of his so doing, and effectually stopped Mr. Dunn's further proceedings by getting him imprisoned for one or two years, which period he passed in the Remand Ward of the Queen's Bench. Whether his pursuit of the lady—and pursuit it really was, for he followed her wherever she went, in town or country—was instigated by Cupid or cupidity, is not for me to say; but I believe the cure was effectual, and that after his release the persecution ceased. Dunn was an Irish barrister, and in his day was quite a celebrity through his forced and unwelcome attentions to the wealthy daughter of Sir Francis Burdett, the great Radical baronet. Here also the notorious Barnard Gregory, the editor of the 'Satirist' newspaper, passed more than one term of imprisonment for libel; but as pens, ink, and paper were not among the articles prohibited by the prison rules, he continued to pour forth his weekly doses of scurrility and abuse in the columns of his paper.

Over each doorway was painted in large figures the number of the staircase. Many of the windows were both gaily and curiously decorated, and from a contemplation of one of them a very fair idea of the tenant of the room could be arrived at.

Nearly all the lower or ground floor rooms were occupied by men who had turned them into places of business—into shops, in fact. Here were cobblers—I beg their pardon, boot and shoe makers—tailors and barbers, who worked for inmates of the prison. Turners, watchmakers, frame-makers, and other artisans who had fallen into misfortune, carried on their handicrafts in these lower rooms, the windows of which were more or less

plastered up and rendered opaque either with curtains, indications of the man's trade, or sometimes with dirt.

The first floor rooms were, next to the State House, the aristocratic abodes. Here the windows were decorated with flowers in pots outside and gay curtains within. From many of them was suspended game of all sorts—grouse, pheasants, partridges, and hares, waiting to be taken to Joe Colwell's kitchen or to be dressed for table by the amateur cooks in their own rooms. Many a window, in addition to the dead birds hanging by it, was decorated in the early sunny morning with living ones in cages, whose songs enlivened the place, sounding pleasantly both to the inmate of the room and those walking along the Parade, as the long pavement was termed.

From the Parade the ground sloped gradually for a little distance, and was paved with granite cubes, till it reached the dead level of the racquet-grounds or Park, the whole of which was gravelled. Great attention was paid to these racquet courts by men who held the posts of racquet-masters. Every morning early, the sound of the great heavy roller was heard crunching over the gravel, as the racquet-master or his boys watered and rolled it preparatory to the day's play, which generally commenced as soon as the 'swell players' had finished their breakfasts and their morning papers.

At the junction of the gravelled ground with that paved with stones were three pumps. One, in direct front of the Chapel door, was called the Dolphin, from the spout being shaped, not like the real fish of that name, but the mythological and artistic representation of it. The water that issued from the fish's mouth on a vigo-

rous working of the long iron handle was such as can only be obtained in few places in and about London, and those far between. It was as different from the wretched fluid Londoners receive through the ordinary pipes of the water companies as Veuve Clicquot is to ginger-beer. It was simply delicious, cool, sparkling, and pure. My first walk in the morning and my last at night before turning in, for many months was to the old Dolphin pump, glass in hand, and a full half-pint each time was a draught I have many a time since remembered. The recollection of those drinks has made me long for the fairy carpet of the Eastern tale that would waft me from the side of some muddy water-hole—to reach which I have ridden miles out of my way beneath a blazing Australian sun—to that dear old pump in the Bench Park. Only those who have experienced the want of good drinkable water can really appreciate such a fluid as that iron dolphin ejects from his mouth.

One day I was walking down, glass in hand, to have a pull at the Dolphin when Jack Johnson, well known in London as a man about town—a hard-living, hard-drinking, rollicking fellow, a favourite with all, and no one's enemy but his own—asked me what I was going to do.

'Have a drink of water,' I replied.

'A drink of water!' said he, in a tone of equal astonishment and disgust. 'What, raw? D—— it, man, water's bad enough if it gets into your boots: it's the devil in your stomach.'

Jack was a frequent visitor to the Bench, not as a resident, but as a pure visitor, for many a man knew

Jack, and was always glad to see his good-humoured face enter his room, knowing well that no dull care or serious faces would be long where he was.

Very unlike Jack Johnson in his appreciation of a draught of pure spring-water was the old French Abbé, who, after drinking a glass of bright, cool, crystal fluid, exclaimed, 'Delicious! Ah! if it were only a sin how one would enjoy it!'

The wing at the south end of the Parade is shut off from the other portion, being set aside for such of the fairer and weaker sex as, being either maids or widows, have no husband on whose shoulders to shunt their debts and liabilities, and so are amenable to the vulgar touch of the Sheriff's officer and the inconvenience of imprisonment for debt. At one time, years ago, the ladies had no separate department to themselves, but had locations in any room and on any staircase that might be vacant. For reasons various, this arrangement was altered and the present one adopted. In those days the ground floor of the south wing was the public coffee-room, and was kept open all night.

Noting many of these particulars of the place as I walked down the Parade on the occasion of my first morning's voyage of discovery, I reached the end, and entered the door of No. 16 staircase, in which as I had noticed on the card given me with the key my room was situated. It was the top one, immediately over the door, and the window commanded a full view of the whole Parade and Park. Proceeding through the door, I entered a small lodge, where a turnkey is always stationed, day and night; and passing another door opposite, I entered a large hall, in which was a wide

well-staircase, leading up to the top or fourth floor, and well lighted from a skylight in the roof above. At one end of the hall is a door leading to the female department, with a large knocker, which had to be put in use before anyone, and those only the friends of lady *détenues*, could be admitted. At the opposite end a door led into the back yard, and here I found a quite different aspect of the prison. Almost facing the door was a small butcher's stall—it could hardly be called a shop—where during certain hours of the day a butcher from outside offered meat for sale. On the right hand, in a corner, and under the shadow of the lofty wall, was a little house, in which lived the baker and his family, his shop in front, and his bakery and oven in the rear, with living-rooms above. Here the Benchers could get bread and hot rolls, and have pies, puddings, and meat baked. There was no restriction as to dealing with this baker; anyone was perfectly free to have all his provisions from anywhere he liked, and several of the neighbouring tradesmen sent in for orders regularly every day—grocers, bakers, butchers, and fishmongers.

Next door to the baker's shop was the Public Kitchen, the domain of Joseph Colwell, who presided in his shirt-sleeves and his 'boss' eye, which to all beholders proclaimed him the son of his father. The kitchen was a large building, fitted with the proper appliances of ovens, steamers, &c., for the simultaneous cooking of many dinners, and for heating large supplies of water. Everyone in the place could have any quantity of boiling water; the County or poor debtors for nothing, and all others on paying one halfpenny.

At this kitchen anyone could have their cooking done or pastry made; and some of the dinners that Joe Colwell and his assistants (for Joe himself only did the looking on and collecting the pence, except when it was requisite to prepare any very particular dish) dished up and sent in to some of the Benchers, were enough to make a *creditor* stare, and would have vied with those of the Star and Garter itself. Geese, turkeys, poultry, and game of all sorts were to be seen roasting on the large spits, together with all other things in season. A casual visitor accidentally straying in there would think he had stepped into the kitchen of some baronial hall or of one of the great City Companies on a *Court* day, when liverymen and aldermen were about to dine. The fees for cooking provided Joe with a good income, out of which he must have saved money, for his expenses were but slight, as he lived with his wife, who was an invalid, in two ground-floor rooms opposite to the great kitchen, and divided from it by a court-yard, in which were some two or three patches of earth, some four feet square, upon which some of Joe's spare hours were devoted in the vain attempt to make them look like a garden. We all know the sickly, stunted, begrimed appearance a London back-yard garden has, surrounded by high walls and buildings that admit only thin slices of sunshine to reach the poor plants, whose leaves are powdered with the soot of hundreds of smoky chimneys. On turning the corner and coming in view of the kitchen, my appearance was the signal for a loud outburst of shrieks and squalls from Mrs. Colwell's pet parrot, whose cage was placed upon a chair near the door. Polly was an institution

of the Bench; everyone took notice of her. After looking in and taking a survey of the place, I turned to retrace my steps, and on reaching the corner of the main building I saw for the first time the 'County side,' or locality where those *détenus* who receive the County allowance reside. Their rooms are the back ones of the main building, in every way similar to the front ones; but instead of the open Parade and Park facing them there is only a narrow yard, some thirty feet wide, between the building and the lofty wall, with its iron *chevaux de frise* on the top. This wall runs round the whole place and encloses some four or five acres. It reaches as high as the windows of the third story, and limits the view of the tenants of all rooms below the top floor to the grim ugliness of its dingy bricks and mortar. The fourth-story rooms commanded an extensive view of the chimney-pots of Southwark, the various metropolitan church steeples, and such buildings as reared their heads above the ordinary houses, with the Surrey hills or those bordering the North of London in the distance, according to the direction of the aspect. The consequence was that top rooms were eagerly sought after and prized almost as much as the first floor front ones. From these top windows a good view of any fire that might occur within a somewhat wide radius was obtained; and often when the lurid red that indicates a fire appeared in the sky there would be a rush up to the top landings to obtain a view.

The back yard had its own pumps; and at the end, next the yard in which were the baker's shop and kitchen, were high iron railings, with a gate, which,

though not actually locked till all the visitors were turned out at 9 P.M., was considered as closed at three in the afternoon, for after that time none of the 'County' prisoners were allowed out of the division allotted to them. At the foot of the staircase, next to the Chapel, on the south side, was a door leading from the back to the front divisions, from the yard of the County men to the Parade and Park in front. This door was closed altogether at 3 P.M. Up to that hour, the County debtors had free access to any part of the prison, and were allowed to play racquets in the southern court, which was set aside for their special use. No restrictions were placed upon the tenants of these back rooms from having their friends and visitors in from 8 A.M. to 9 P.M. like all the others. The Chapel reached from the Parade to the back-yard, and was entered by doors from either.

As I retraced my steps towards my own temporary quarters, I met several groups of children as well as women coming in to spend the day with their incarcerated fathers and husbands. Many men had their wives and families with them all day long, the little ones and mother having sleeping-rooms in some of the small streets surrounding the Bench. Poor children! some of them were learning the rough ways of this world, and obtaining a bitter experience of the shifts and contrivances of life, at a time when they should only have been revelling in the games and pleasures of childhood. Many a 'Becky Sharp' had her first training in the Queen's Bench.

Many men that I knew there never had their children in at all, and deprived themselves of the pleasure of their dear ones' society, rather than bring

them within reach of the contaminations of such an atmosphere—rather than that their tender
bilities should be shocked and surprised by much they might be witnesses of.

On my walk up the Parade—which I had paced and found to be a good ninety-five yards long—I met several itinerant vendors of fish, poultry, and other things, carrying their wares and calling out what they had to sell. On reaching the northern end I found that the sloping pavement opposite the window of the Receiving Ward and the two taverns, Grapes and Britannia, was taken possession of by dealers from outside, who were laying out their goods—vegetables, fruit, fish, &c.—on the ground, and preparing to hold a small market. As soon as the rules permitted their entrance, men and women with bloaters, shrimps, watercress, and other cheap breakfast dainties brought in their supplies, which they carried from room to room of their customers, tempting them to purchase the materials to make the morning meal enjoyable.

The laundresses seemed to be all 'high busy,' pail and broom in hand, flitting from the rooms of the early risers to those of the late ones, sweeping, cleaning, bed-making, and preparing breakfast. So also were many of those gentlemen debtors who 'did for themselves.' Men in shirt-sleeves and all sorts of curious costumes were to be seen busy at their domestic duties. All three pumps were busily at work, and it was not without a smile and a recollection of some fair pictures I had seen of 'Girls at the Spring,' 'Margaret and the German Mädchen drawing Water,' and even 'Rachel at the Well,' that I looked on at some of the scenes at

the pumps before me. Though far from 'young and lovely,' the laundresses were not too old for gossiping and chaffing with all around them. Plenty of tittle-tattle and scandal went on during the intervals of filling pitchers and pails. In some instances the time occupied here was so great as to exhaust the patience of the gentlemen waiting to be 'attended to.'

A window just over the Post-office was thrown violently up, and a head surmounted by a Turkish fez was thrust out. 'Now, then, Susan, my dark beauty, how long am I to wait for that water?'

'I'm 'a cumin', sar,' replied Susan, a mahogany-coloured daughter of 'Afric's coral strand,' with a broad grin all over her face, and displaying a set of teeth a duchess might envy. 'Now, Corney, please git me dat pitchum.' And, holding out one hand for the brown stone jar of water Old Corney had gallantly filled for her, she gave her bonnet a 'dab' on the crown, to set it straight upon her head, with the other, and, having secured the 'pitchum,' darted suddenly off from the pump, nearly upsetting a dapper little valet who was on his way with two buckets to fill for Captain P——'s morning bath.

There were several gentlemen debtors who, like Mr. Pickwick when in the Fleet, had their own servants to attend upon them, and Captain P——'s valet regarded himself as being in his own way as heavy a swell as his master, whom he considered only one very small degree below the Emperor of all the Russias.

Seeing Mr. Kendall looking out of his window, and returning his bow, I crossed the yard to the State House and ascended the stairs to his room.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BREAKFAST PARTY AT MR. KENDALL'S.

I FOUND Mr. Kendall standing at his open door to welcome me on ascending the stairs. He ushered me into his apartments; for the room being, as all the state rooms are, a large one, measuring about 25 feet by 14, had a small portion at one end partitioned off to form a bedroom, leaving the remainder as a good-sized parlour, dining-room, or what you will. Each room had a window; that of the bedroom, or 'cabin,' as the old gentleman termed his, looked towards the 'Tap,' the corner where the two taverns, the Grapes and the Britannia, opened their doors twice daily for an hour, from one till two, and from five till six o'clock. The other window looked south, over the racquet-courts, and anyone seated at it had a good view of the players.

His laundress, Mrs. Clarke, a neat little woman, was busy dividing her attentions between finishing the arrangement of the breakfast-table and certain culinary operations going on at the fireplace, at the end of the room opposite to the sleeping-cabin.

I saw that the table was laid for four, so supposed I should make acquaintance with some of my brothers in misfortune. After welcoming me in, asking how I had passed my first night under Her Majesty's roof, and

handing me the morning paper and a new number of 'Punch,' my host stepped out on the landing and knocked at the door of the room opposite. 'We're all ready, Martin, and only waiting for the kidneys,' said he, opening the door.

'All right, me boy; they'll be done in a jiffy, and I'll be with ye,' was heard, in a rich Irish brogue, and at the same time a loud, firm footstep sounded on the stairs as some one descended.

'Come along! come along!' said Mr. Kendall, entering the room, followed by a tall, well-set, square-built man of very *distingué* appearance. 'Breakfast is all ready, and Dick Martin is putting the finishing touch to the stewed kidneys. Let me introduce Mr. Brett, our latest arrival. Mr. Brett—Mr. Dufour.'

'You are from Whitecross Street, I suppose, sir,' said Mr. Dufour, 'and I congratulate you on your change of quarters. I also have to congratulate you on having had allotted to you the best room in the Bench out of the State House. Do you know, Kendall, Mr. Brett has the key of Willis's room? You must have talked very persuasively to George Husted as you came along; as I hear from John Colwell, that the moment he arrived with you last night he inquired if the room had been given away, and asked for it to be allotted to his new introduction here. You have seen it I suppose, sir, as I saw you walking along the Parade this morning early?'

'No, I have not. I must confess I had so little curiosity that I never even went up the stairs, though I was in the same building. Had I wished to, however, I could not, as I handed the key to one of the turnkeys to

give to Husted, who is going to get it ready for me. I suppose it is like the other rooms?'

'Not at all, sir,' said Mr. Dufour. 'The last tenant, Mr. Willis, of the great silk house, C—— & Co., of the City, spent upwards of twenty pounds in having it fitted up for his own convenience. He had a year to stop in it, was a rich man, and made it as comfortable as possible. When furnished it was a little gem of a room. You will see what luck you have to get it when you have looked at it.'

'Here ye are, me boys, as hot as love. Kendall, introduce me to your friend,' said the new-comer, entering the room with a saucepan in one hand and a pile of four plates in the other. Placing the first in the fender and the latter on the table, he shook his hand. 'The carrying of those plates is a training for Purgatory; so I give you all fair warning how ye touch them.'

'Martin, this is Mr. Augustus Brett, our arrival of last night. Mr. Brett, let me introduce Mr. Richard Martin, the editor of the "Sun," and now, as all is ready, let us waste no more time, but get our breakfast. Gentlemen, you see your breakfast, and may good digestion wait on appetite.'

Our host set the example, and we all seated ourselves at the well-spread table.

Stewed kidneys, broiled bacon, boiled eggs, and kippered herrings formed the hot dishes. Knuckle of ham, the remains of a brace of grouse, and a standing Lincolnshire pork pie were ready, cold, to support them in furnishing us with a good meal; while coffee, tea, claret, and bottled Bass, afforded ample choice of fluid to wash it down.

'How came Mr. Willis, if so rich, to have a twelve months' residence here?' I asked, as soon as we were all seated and well to work.

'Oh, I thought everyone knew of his case, 'replied our host. 'Willis is a partner, or rather, I think I may say, was—for I understood him to say he did not intend to continue in business—he was a partner in the great firm of C—— & Co., in the silk trade, who were mixed up in what were termed the "Custom House frauds." For years past, by means of "backsheesh" to the officials, they had been in the habit of getting large quantities of silk goods smuggled into the country, and of course, as no duty was paid, they were able not only to undersell their rivals in trade, but to make enormous profits. When the *éclaircissement* took place, several Custom House officials suddenly discovered the English climate to be uncongenial to their health, and crossed the sea to milder and safer countries. C—— & Co. were proceeded against by Government, and fined 100,000*l*., which they paid, and no doubt could well afford to do so; and Mr. Willis, your predecessor in the room in No. 16 staircase, was sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment here.'

'I should have thought Newgate or some other criminal gaol would have been the place they would have sent him to,' said I.

'No,' said Martin, 'his infraction of the law did not come under the unpleasant category of felonies. Smuggling is only a misdemeanour, and, as what is termed a first-class misdemeanant, like a gentleman, Mr. Willis was sent, poor fellow, to spend his penitential year in this palace of a prison; and for fear his expurga-

tion should be too severe, they not only allowed him to make his room a little paradise of a place, but permitted his wife to stay with him altogether.'

'How was that?' I inquired. 'I noticed in reading over the rules that all ladies are bound to leave the place on the bell ringing at nine o'clock.'

'Rules, like promises and piecrusts, are made to be broken, and that rule is as fragile as the rest of them,' continued the editor of the 'Sun.' 'In Willis's case, however, it was not an infringement but an evasion of the rule, for by employing that same oily tongue of his which he used in persuading the landing-waiters and Custom House officers to accept his pleasant little additions to the paltry pittances they received from Government in the way of salaries, in consideration of adopting his peculiar system of clearing goods, he gammoned the prison doctor here that he had a predisposition to fits, and that it would be highly conducive to his health, and of course, to his comfort—the last in a mental parenthesis—if a dispensation could be granted for Mrs. Willis to share the pretty little boudoir of a room he spent so much money on. His own blarney tongue was backed up by some outside powerful influence of members of Parliament who were relatives, and I think very few men have ever passed through a sentence of twelve months' imprisonment in such a heavenly manner as the late acting partner in C—— & Co. He was not a bad sort, though.'

'Ah, there are many in the Bench will miss him now he has gone,' said Mr. Dufour. 'This place, sir, as you will find in a short time, is a little world of itself. Within these walls you will be able to study almost

every phase of life. Honest industry struggling for a living in one room, vice and debauchery in their most repugnant shapes in the next; misfortune manfully battled against here, chicanery and fraud of the most flagrant description in triumphant revelry there. Poverty, hunger, misery, and dirt are next door neighbours on the same staircase with luxury and extravagance; lust, homicide, and avarice are domiciled in close juxtaposition with true Christian charity and benevolence. The world itself is a queer *mélange*; and in the Queen's Bench you have its most salient points, its most striking features, the most prominent of human faults, passions, vices, and virtues, concentrated in a small space convenient for contemplation by those who are fond of studying the world——'

'The flesh and the devil,' added Mr. Martin. 'When the gentleman in black casts his net in this neighbourhood he must look sharp that it's in good repair, for it's a mighty big draught of fish, and few of them flat ones, he'll catch in the Borough of Southwark.'

'Willis,' continued Mr. Dufour, not heeding Martin's interruption, 'tried hard to find out all the cases of poverty and want in this little community of ours, and when he found parties deserving did not confine his sympathy to word only, but rendered prompt and efficient pecuniary relief. How many parcels of clothing and bedding he redeemed from the pawnbrokers, and the exact number of the little troop of children that went to a school in the Borough Road at his expense, only the good angel who records such deeds knows, for neither he nor Mrs. Willis ever spoke of such things except when in search of fresh cases for their charity.'

'Did I understand you to say, sir,' I asked of Mr. Dufour, 'that men are put here for homicide?'

'Yes, sir, I said for homicide. You will see in the course of this very day Lieutenant F——, of the East India Company's Service, playing racquets. He beat his Syce, one of his native servants, and giving the poor fellow an unfortunate blow—harder than he intended, no doubt—he killed him. F—— was tried by court martial, sentenced to imprisonment, and by taking advantage of that palladium of the British Constitution, the *habeas corpus*, got himself removed —in the custody of a tipstaff, of course, and at great expense—from the far from agreeable place of incarceration in some up-country station in India to the Queen's Bench. And here he is—a broken man, of course, as far as his military career is concerned—and I think no man in the place tries harder to make his time pass pleasantly. He is a great player of our special game, racquets; and no doubt you will have the pleasure of seeing him and our friend here'—pointing to Mr. Martin—'playing in the course of the day.'

I looked at Mr. Martin, and I thought I never saw a more unlikely racquet-player in my life. I saw him play that afternoon, and acknowledged to myself what a bad judge I must be of what a man is capable of from merely looking at him. I may as well here describe the two gentlemen I had been introduced to on this morning, and in whose company I have spent so many pleasant hours. It was with feelings very far from indifference that a few years after, when on the other side of the world, I at different times read of both of their deaths.

Richard Martin—or *Little* Martin, as he was called by his friends—weighed one-and-twenty stone; so that my look of surprise on hearing him spoken of as a racquet-player may be excused; as may also my astonishment when I saw him, later in the day, stripped to his trowsers and a guernsey, with a silk handkerchief tied round his head, fly from one side of the Racquet Court to the other and catch up the ball as nimbly as the very lightest stripling. When I saw, after the first bout of the game was over, how the perspiration rolled off him in streams, and to supply its place how at one draught he poured a whole pot of half-and-half down his throat, I made up my mind never to jump to a conclusion as to what a man can do from merely seeing him walk into a room and seat himself at his breakfast.

Mr. Martin was a native of Galway and a member of the Irish Bar, a man of no mean literary abilities, and one of the editors of the 'Sun,' evening newspaper. His days were passed, in the morning, in looking over the files of morning papers, brought to him for that purpose; his afternoons in the violent exercise of playing racquets, for to a man of his weight and size—he stood 6 feet 2 inches—a game of racquets was nothing else, and he threw the whole vigour of his energetic mind into it. His evenings and nights, except an hour or so, from eight to ten, when he joined in a sociable rubber of whist in some friend's room, were devoted to leader-writing and other literary labours connected with his editorial duties. It was supposed he never slept or went to bed; for at whatever hour, between 10 P.M. and sunrise, you looked up to his window on the top floor of the State House there was his light burning, and the

shadow of his figure defined against the window-blind. And certainly he did not lie long in the morning, if he did go to bed; for, not waiting till the eight o'clock bell announced that the hour had arrived for the laundresses and wives to enter the prison, and not having a valet, like Captain P——, to get the water for his bath, he might be heard every morning at six o'clock, summer and winter, pumping his two buckets full at the Dolphin for his own 'tub.' At certain times, when Parliament was sitting, his afternoon game of racquets would be sadly interrupted by visits of sundry small boys from the office with material for special articles and urgent demands for 'copy,' as the manuscript is technically termed in the newspaper world; and the staff of 'devils' the printers employed in sending batch after batch of 'proofs' for correction, must have been considerably augmented, in consequence of Mr. Martin's being compelled to write his editorials on the opposite side of the Thames to that on which the 'Sun' office, in the Strand, was situated. Not only was he a most active racquet and fives player but a swimmer of no mean prowess, and was champion of the Shannon—a most amusing and agreeable companion, and as warm-hearted a fellow as even the Emerald Isle ever produced. In an unlucky moment he yielded to the persuasion of a gentleman who represented to him that Ireland was to be entirely regenerated by railways, leading from one place to another, irrespective of whether the country through which they were to pass had any means of providing the least amount of traffic. A joint-stock company was formed; Martin became a 'provisional director;' the joint-stock company came to grief, and so did the

editor of the 'Sun.' In those days limited liability was hardly dreamt of, and when a company did go wrong, it behoved all connected with it to seek a foreign shore and more sunny skies, if they wished to avoid a long residence at 'No. 1 Belvedere Place, Southwark.'

In appearance Martin was almost a giant, but with very small head, hands, and feet. He was otherwise so well-proportioned that he did not look his great weight. His figure was erect and well set-up. In this respect no drill-sergeant could have improved him. His good-humoured face was surmounted by dark, close-cut hair, just tinged with iron grey, and getting thin on the top and over the temples. He had merry, piercing dark eyes, one of which had a very slight outward and upward cast, that rather lent expression to his face, from which he ruthlessly removed every portion of beard and whisker each morning after his 'tub.' The cast in his eye was of the same description as that of Marshal Soult, with this difference, that the great lieutenant's face seemed almost as incapable of the slightest relaxation from its habitual seriousness as that of the great Duke his conqueror; while Martin's was altogether one great smile, that seized upon the heart of everyone who came within its influence.

Reader, has it ever struck you what a wonderful difference there is in the expression of the faces of people who are afflicted with obliquity of vision? It may be said that a squint is a squint, whatever it may be, and can be no improvement to either sex. Granted —both no doubt are to be regarded more as blemishes than as adjuncts to beauty; but there is a vast difference between an inward 'squint' and an outward 'cast' in

the eye. If the face is an index to the mind, certainly the eye is the most important part of it; and I hope I may not be put down by my readers as uncharitable when I say that I have seldom met a person with an 'inward squint' who had not an equal obliquity in mind and character. It has not often been my fate to meet with persons with an inward squint, or, as the Lancashire people call it, 'skenn,' in whom I would care about placing implicit confidence. Yet there are exceptions, and more than one friend I esteem highly is afflicted with this drawback to his otherwise good looks.

The other of Mr. Kendall's guests, though not so tall as 'Little Martin,' was considerably above the average height. An erect figure, square shoulders, and solid chest proclaimed a powerful man. A graceful demeanour, perfect ease of manner, scrupulous neatness in dress (which was in perfect good taste), and the quiet expression of his face, over which a most charming smile would spread itself, like sunshine on a cornfield, told very plainly that Henry Clarke Dufour was a good example of an English gentleman. Well read, travelled, and being one who observed as he journeyed, he was an entertaining companion. He had a good-humoured, merry expression in the corner of his eye that suggested how readily he could appreciate a good story. Though turned forty years of age not a sign of a grey hair was to be seen, and but a very slight baldness had as yet begun to show itself on the crown of his head. What was very unusual in those days, except in military men and a certain class of 'swells out of luck' in the Bench and Whitecross, Dufour wore a large moustache, with

clean-shaved cheeks and chin. He, like Martin, was a victim of the Railway Mania. A member of a good county family, he had taken an active part in endeavouring to develop the opening up of his district by railways. Two rival companies fiercely contested for the line. The contest was costly; and so great were the legal and Parliamentary expenses that when Dufour's company was defeated, nought but ruin stared all connected with it in the face—all, that is, except the lawyers and the engineers, who for a long time talked over the details of the great battle between the Great North and the Direct North lines, as they sipped their '27 port and cracked their walnuts with all the gusto of old soldiers 'fighting o'er again their battles,' and without one feeling of compassion for those to whom defeat meant ruin and flight, and, if the latter were too long delayed, the fate of Henry Clarke Dufour. His tastes were refined, and many of his leisure-hours were spent at the easel, where he reproduced many an incident of his foreign travels or home adventures when he rode with the county hounds or set forth to make his bag upon 'the First.' He was no mean artist; and though no doubt the professional critics and the *dilettanti* picked his pictures to pieces, he contrived to so tell his story on the canvas as to leave no doubt of its subject and to please most of those who saw them. Though urged to do so on several occasions, he never sold any of his paintings; but many a friend on leaving the Queen's Bench carried with him a substantial memento of Henry Dufour.

All breakfast-parties must come to an end at some time—even those solemn affairs without which it seems

impossible for any respectable people to be united in the bonds of holy matrimony. Ours was brought to a little earlier conclusion than we intended, for just as we had lighted up our pipes a knock was heard at the door.

'Come in! come in!'

The door opened and revealed the form of George Husted.

'Good morning, gentlemen,' said he. 'I was told Mr. Brett was here; and I should be glad if you would come over to your room and arrange how you would like the things put.'

'I'll come at once,' I replied. 'Mr. Kendall, you'll excuse my running off, and you too, gentlemen?'

'I'll come with you,' said Dufour. 'I should like to see the room in its new guise, if you have no objection.'

'Pray come, and I trust it will not be the last visit; and you, too, gentlemen. I am anxious to see this wonderful room.'

Mr. Kendall opened the window looking over the Park and racquet-courts and hung a red cotton handkerchief outside. It was a signal, he explained to me, to Mrs. Clarke that his room was at her service to clear up and put to rights.

We all sallied forth and directed our steps down the Parade towards No. 16 staircase; and it seemed that I was the observed of all observers, and was frequently pointed out as I passed along as the lucky man who had got Willis's room.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ROOM IN 16 STAIRCASE.

ASCENDING the well-staircase of No. 16, we cracked many jokes as to the exercise in climbing four flights of stairs, but on getting to the top I was thankful there were no more. Turning to the right, and at the end of the long broad landing, we found the door of my room standing wide open, but the entrance blocked up with chairs, tables, and other articles of furniture. Inside the room were Husted and another man just finishing the screwing together of a wooden French bedstead, which appeared to me so fully to occupy the whole space as to leave no room for anything else. After waiting a moment or two till the last screw was tightened 'home,' and the bedstead was pushed into a corner, I saw that there was ample room for all the rest of the things. Putting aside the articles blocking up the entrance, we stepped in, and I looked round to see what my new home was like.

I had better here explain that all the ground and first floor rooms of the whole building, except the State House, had the groined, cloister-like ceilings I have already described, but that on the second and third storeys the rooms had all flat ceilings, as in ordinary houses. The room was about fourteen feet square and nine feet high. The window, of good size, faced the door

and looked right down the Parade, commanding a full view of the whole of the Park, Parade, racquet courts, and the entrance lodge and gate. The room being immediately over the lobby of the entrance of the staircase from the Parade, every person on entering the prison could be seen from the window directly on entering and during the whole of their course along the Parade.

On the left hand, on entering, was the fireplace, on each side of which were conveniently-fitted cupboards, which had been put in by Mr. Willis. The window itself, instead of being, like all the other windows in the place, an ordinary sash, was composed of a pair of French doors, made of oak, and each fitted with a large sheet of strong, plate glass. They had been made specially for and at the cost of my predecessor, who thoroughly understood what a window ought to be. This gave all light possible to the room when closed; and as both doors—or, perhaps, casements would be the more correct word—opened widely, admitted all the air that could possibly enter, and possessed the great essentials of opening wide and shutting close. Outside the window-ledge was what from the outside view I had taken to be a rather deep box, in which to place flowerpots; but a closer examination from the room itself revealed it to have been Mrs. Willis's open-air larder. Outside the door in the passage was another and a larger larder. The room was papered with an oak-pattern and varnished, and all the woodwork oak-grained. The regulation Government grate had been removed, and also the chimney-piece and mantelshelf, and new ones fitted in their places. The one

was painted and grained to represent marble, and the other had a boiler fitted to it, so that hot water could always be had. The marks on the walls showed where the neat bookshelves had been, over one of the dwarf cupboards, and there yet remained the brackets that had supported the cornice-pole. The floor had been newly laid with thin boards over the old ones, and all round the room it was painted. A square carpet had been in the middle, and the studs to which it had been fastened by rings to stretch it on the floor had to be removed, to prevent my continually tripping over them.

I heard wonderful tales of the extraordinary bedstead Mr. and Mrs. W. had had, and I only wished Mr. Husted had supplied me with one of a similar description, instead of the cumbersome affair known as a wooden French bedstead. Mr. W.'s appears to have been an elegant couch in the daytime, suitable for a drawing-room, and giving no signs of being anything else. At night it formed a large and convenient bed. On hearing Husted's description of it and its crimson damask covering and cushions I suggested his letting me have a similar one.

'I have a nice sofy bedstead, sir, if you would like that,' said Husted.

'Thank you all the same,' I replied; 'but "No, thank you, please," as I once heard a little boy say to his mamma when she tried to gammon him into taking a powder. If I am to employ my midnight hours in hunting expeditions, at least let me have a fair chance of catching "mine enemy."'

'Oh, sir, mine hasn't anything of the sort in it, I'm sure,' replied Husted.

'Nonsense,' said Dufour; 'a sofa-bedstead without a resident population is an impossibility. Whoever invented them must have been prompted by Mephistopheles himself, for no mere man's ingenuity could have contrived such a perfect apparatus for preventing those small foes of humanity from becoming extinct. There is no article of furniture I know of in which so many snug, out-of-the-way corners are artfully contrived for them to rear their happy families safe and free from any possible interference or attacks from man or woman either. A sofa-bedstead will puzzle the 'cutest woman alive to hunt her enemies successfully, and no sane housewife, except a lodging-house-keeper, would ever admit one into her house. The generality of lodging-house landladies and those small industrious creatures are of similar species—the one feeds upon the pocket, and the other on the blood——'

'There's the bell for opening the "taps,"' said Mr. Kendall. 'I have some wine orders to see to for General Latour, and must go, or I shall be too late.'

'We'll all go together. Come with me, Brett, and I will point out to you some of the people here. It will be a good opportunity to see them, as it is the hour of "high 'Change." Husted's folks will get your place in order. Come along.' And, placing his arm in mine, Dufour drew me off, and we went down stairs together.

'Now,' said he, when we reached the Parade, 'I will be your Mentor and tell you who is who. You will readily comprehend that there are men here to be avoided, and there are some, again, with whom you will be able to pass an agreeable hour. You see the pair coming this way: the big, heavy-looking man, with the slight

stoop, walking beside his masculine-featured wife. Regard her face—what fixed, dogged determination it indicates! She is the terror of the Law Courts, to one of which, I dare say, she has been to-day applying in person for a Rule, or some such thing, in the struggle she is ever making to get her husband out of prison. When he is out, he is a greater plague to the Judges and the Vice-Chancellors than she is, for he is everlastingly bringing motions before some Court or another. He attends always in person, as his wife does. He is the son of the late W—— C——, the political writer and economist. He inherits all his father's pertinacity; but lacks his common sense, for he does nothing else but go to law with everyone. He has actions pending now against the Governor, Deputy Governor, and several of the other officials for some imaginary wrongs. Every now and then he fancies he can attend to some particular motion he has in view before some Court better than his "better half," and has a *habeas*[9] procured to take him up there in a tipstaff's custody. It generally results in the same way, and he returns after his walk no better off than when he started. I do not pretend to understand his several cases, and they are legion. If he has really right on his side, he *is* a perfect martyr to Law. On the contrary, if what he bothers the Courts about are only crotchets, he must be an infernal nuisance. Here he is as quiet and as harmless with everybody as possible, except the higher officials, and with them he is in hot water always. Here, do you see this little dark fellow in the undress naval uniform——'

'He looks like a monkey with all that hair on his face and those piercing black eyes. Who is he?'

'He calls himself Dr. Anthony Maitland Todd. Heaven only knows what his real name is. He says he has been a naval surgeon, but no one can find him in any Navy List, and old Admiral Bouchier, in the State House, says he never served in the navy in his life. At any rate, he is a deuced clever fellow, and beats the prison Medico hollow. He has been all over the world, and tells some extraordinary yarns. He is altogether a mystery to everyone. He lives on the Poor side, but report says he has plenty of money. All sorts of people come here to consult him professionally—ladies of title among the rest. He once doctored me, and put me to rights in a marvellous short time. You must make his acquaintance; but be careful of him.'

'Why?'

'Well, I cannot tell you why, simply because I do not know. Report speaks ill of him, but can say nothing definitely. He is charming company, and deuced clever at all sort of things; but there is a case of Dr. Fell with him—the old "I do not like thee, Dr. Fell," sort of feeling with most folks who associate with him.'

'Who is this—a parson—the man walking on the gravel, with white tie and green glasses?' I asked.

'Yes, he is a parson, but far from one of the ornaments of the Church.

'Why, here's another parson!' said I, as a rather jovial but eminently respectable-looking gentleman, in strictly clerico-cut black and neatly-tied white choker, approached us.

'That! Oh, dear, no,' Dufour replied; 'he's a long way from the Clergy List of any sort, Church or Dis-

sent. That's the great Mr. Bill Crofts, the landlord of the Bull's Head Tavern, in Windmill Street—one of the very flashiest of sporting public-houses—or 'cribs' is the correct term—in all London. If a fight or a rat-killing match is to be arranged, Bill Croft's parlour is the place where it is done. That very sedate and clerical-looking individual, if he chose to be communicative, could tell us more genuine tales of the Marquis of Waterford and all the swells of his school, than any other man in London.'

'Why, he looks more like a preacher than anything of the sort,' I said. 'Certainly his trowsers are the least little bit horsey in their cut, but I should not have thought they meant more than a quiet little cob to ride round his parish on; and I should never for one moment have suspected him of anything more sporting than a partiality for partridge-shooting and riding out to see the hounds throw off.'

'Ah, Mr. Brett, you must not always judge by appearances here as to what men are. This young man coming across the racquet court is Croft's son-in-law—Russell is his name. He is the man who brought the celebrated *qui-tam* action against Lord George Bentinck, and is always now called "Qui Tam Russell."'

We had now arrived at the corner where the Grapes and the Britannia had opened their doors for one hour to supply all comers with beer and, under certain regulations, with wine and spirits.

Every man, not on the County side of the Prison, could have one pint of wine a day, which he might either purchase from one or other of the taps, or have from home or elsewhere outside. It was necessary to sign

the Wine-book—which was kept in the lodge in No. 16 staircase, immediately under my room. The book had to be signed before twelve o'clock; and when anyone wanted to have in a quantity of wine, he had only to ask those who did not want it themselves to sign the book and give their orders. Sometimes men would be running all over the place to get 'wine orders' in this way, with which to pass their wine through the gate.

Spirits were only allowed by Doctor's order, as in Whitecross; and when a spirit order was granted no wine was allowed to the same name.

Dufour and I walked over to the State House and took our stand under the wall in a position from which we could advantageously see all that was going on at the taps without the inconvenience of getting into the crowds that surrounded each.

The 'Grapes' was presided over by a jovial-looking, elderly Boniface, in white apron, who might have been 'mine hoste of ye Tabarde,' in Chaucer's days. Beside him was seated a turnkey, who entered on his slate the name of every man and the number of his room to whom wine or spirits were supplied. Beer I do not think he much troubled himself about; for if a man wanted quarts or gallons, so long as he paid there was no difficulty. Outside his place Boniface was assisted by 'Bill.' Everyone seemed to know Bill. He was a tall, big man of the costermonger or Whitechapel type, with a smooth-shaved, large, rubicund face that spoke volumes as to his good humour. His eyes were small and merry-looking, and when he winked one it was most expressive. He wore corduroy knee-breeches, blue-grey stockings, ankle-lace boots, a double-breasted

waistcoat, with fustian sleeves and two rows of small gilt buttons. Round his throat were several folds of a red cotton handkerchief that looked like a huge poultice, and on his head he wore a 'sealskin cap.' His chief duties were to superintend the band of small boys who carried the cans of beer to the different rooms and brought back the empty tins. When not engaged in this work, Bill stood at the corner with canaries and other caged birds for sale. He was also a trusty messenger to send outside; but the reader can very well understand that his employers were generally of the sporting and rackety sort, and he was seldom selected by young men as the bearer of dutiful letters to their fathers or uncles either in fashionable West End quarters or respectable City offices. I always imagined Bill to have a faithful white bulldog patiently waiting for him outside the gates. He was the sort of man to look only half-clothed without a 'dawg.'

The 'Britannia' Tap was presided over by a smart young barman from the tavern of that name just opposite the prison gate in 'Belvedere Place.' He too had a turnkey with his slate beside him, and also his staff of boys running to and fro with full and empty cans; but there was only one 'Bill.'

The boys were high busy carrying cans of beer, each holding a quart, to the different rooms. A small crowd of Benchers and visitors was congregated about either tap, and those of the gentlemen residents that chose to come for their own beer were continually passing to and fro.

The 'Grapes' was the most favourite tap for stout and porter. Here the beer was drawn by engine from

casks in the cellars below; and at certain times Messrs. Barclay & Perkins' drays came into the yard and delivered their cargoes of fresh supply. It was stated—with what truth I know not—that one of the partners in the great brewery firm had put a special clause in his will that this tap should be supplied with their best beers, to be sold to the Benchers at a fixed low price and perfectly unsophisticated. Their porter at 3*d.* a a pot was better beer, to my taste, than most of the stout, at nearly treble the price, which I had ever been able to get in the outside free world.

The custom of the 'Britannia' was principally for ale, which, as I said before, was brought into the prison in huge cans, whence it was drawn by means of taps.

'Now, Mr. Ball, let us make way for you. Make way for Mr. Ball,' called a man in a velveteen lounging-jacket and straw hat, both the worse for wear. 'Step on one side, if you please, gentlemen, and let Mr. Ball get his beer.'

'Thankee, thankee; good morning,' growled an old man bent nearly double, and carrying a stick in one hand and a spoutless jug in the other.

'How's the rheumatics, Mr. Ball?' asked the officer as the old man ascended the step, placing his jug on the counter.

'Very bad—very bad.'

I noticed the old man as he waited for his dinner-beer, leaning on his stick, and with his disengaged hand on the small of his back. He was dressed in an old dressing-gown that had, I fancy, once been blue, but was now so faded as to make it hazardous to guess at its original colour. His legs were so wound about

with bandages that it was impossible to say what his trowsers were. Round his neck was an old white shawl —such as coachmen in days gone by used to wear— white woollen, with small blue sprigs on it. This was twisted so often round his neck as almost to hide the lower part of his face. His head seemed half-buried in wrappings; and an old battered hat, of the sort that had been quite the fashion in the days of Tom and Jerry, was pulled down on his head and met the folds of the shawl. Nothing but his face was visible, and part of that sometimes sank into his large cravat. He had an enormous nose, which was fat and squabby, without being red. When speaking to anyone he held his head on one side like a jackdaw, and looked up sideways in a comical way from under his grizzly grey bristling eyebrows. Mr. Ball was an old Chancery prisoner of the stubborn sort, who had spent many years in the Bench, and was prepared to die there, rather than succumb to what he called the 'rascally tyranny of the bad laws.' 'They're bad laws, sir, bad laws—iniquitous laws,' he would say, stamping his stick on the ground, by way of emphasis, if anyone drew him into conversation on the sore points of his case.

The old man hobbled off with his jug of beer, and would be no more visible till the same time next day.

Standing with Dufour and a few others under the wall of the State House, taking observations of the various parties on what my Mentor called the 'high 'Change,' our attention was attracted by the loud laughter of a posse of young swells emerging from the door of the Post-office staircase, No. 1. I turned to Dufour.

'Now, friend Mentor, can you enlighten me as to who these people are?'

'The tall man, with dark hair and moustache, and dressed so fantastically, is Captain P——, late of the —— Regt. His father is member for M—shire, and takes as much pains to pile up his money as the gallant (?) Captain does to scatter it.'

'I don't like his looks,' was my remark.

'No; and the more you know of him the less you will like him.'

The man was far from bad-looking, and indeed by some might be considered handsome; but no stage villain ever had a more sinister expression than his face wore. A suit of light-coloured tweed, with a flannel shirt, open at the throat; a bright blue silk handkerchief, loosely thrown round his neck and tied in front in a studied *négligé* knot, somewhat in the fashion that years after became identified with the Italian hero Garibaldi; white shoes, evidently fresh pipeclayed; pale lavender kid gloves; a white handkerchief, arranged with great effect, just peeping out of the outside breast-pocket of his coat; a glass in his right eye; a billycock hat, made of the same material as his suit, on one side of which were placed a few pheasant's feathers; a heavy gold watchchain; and so large a supply of perfume that he quite scented the air, completed the costume of this would-be Adonis. In his right hand he carried a racquet, the handle of which was bound round with white leather, and which, like his shoes, had been freshly pipeclayed by his little valet that morning.

Immediately behind him followed a young man, with fair curly hair, laughing blue eyes, easy, graceful

manner, and the unmistakable air of a gentleman, though evidently one more merry than wise. He walked straight up to the tap, called for beer—a pot—took a draught, and handed it to one of the men next to him. 'Have a pull?' was all he said. He treated the officer in charge and several others standing around, and, throwing down a coin, turned away, without any trouble as to change.

'That's young S——,' said Dufour.

'Any connection of the great "S——?"' I asked.

'Yes, and takes after his ancestor in everything except his splendid talents. Young S—— inherits all the goodness and all the weakness of the old one.'

'But who is the pretty fellow now speaking to the Captain?'

'The Honorable ——, nephew and heir-presumptive to a Marquisate, better known to some among the fair sex as 'Dolly.' He and his brother George—who you will, no doubt, see in the course of the day—are two of the best-looking fellows—a trifle too pretty, perhaps, with those astonishing large, soft, gazelle-looking eyes—in any Court in Europe. As pages, when boys, they were the admiration of all who saw them.'

'This one is certainly quite a ladies' man,' I remarked. 'He puts me in mind of the pages and troubadours one sees in old annuals or in Leslie's pictures.'

'Yes; one seldom sees such eyes, except in a woman. His face is too perfect, and would be all the more expressive if not so. Jack Johnson says a good hammering in a stand-up fight would improve them both; it might possibly be the means of twisting

a nose or some other feature a little picturesquely, and taking the d—— look of uniformity and perfection out of their faces, that now look as if they had been correctly modelled by a sculptor in accordance with all the strictest rules of beauty. But Jack is a funny fellow, and says a good deal more than his prayers. Which is he? Oh, he's not here to-day; but he frequently pays us a visit, and is quite an original, well worth knowing.'

Captain P——, walking across towards the State House, addressed himself to some one at the window just over my head, at the same time giving a rude stare at Dufour and myself, without condescending in any way to notice either of us.

'G——,' said he, 'are you ready for a game? Dick S—— and C—— are both ready.'

'I thought old G—— was going to play,' said the person at the window in reply; 'but I don't see him. Dolly will do as well. I am going to play with Martin when he comes down.'

In a few seconds Mr. G—— came down the State House steps, all ready for play, in trowsers, shirt-sleeves rolled up, and a close-fitting dark-blue cricketing cap on his head. He was a tall, thin, gentlemanly man, with sandy hair and whiskers. Preparations were soon completed, and the first game at racquets I had ever seen played on a good ground was commenced.

Few games bring out a man's activity more than racquets, and if he has any grace it affords an excellent opportunity for displaying it. The four players, Captain P——, G——, 'Dolly,' and young S——, all young men of good physique, were pretty evenly

matched. By the time the first game was finished, a fair crowd of Benchers and visitors had assembled on the Parade and at the tap-corner, while many of the front windows were thrown open, and not a few of them had the fair faces of ladies and children looking on.

The boys attending on the game and throwing in fresh-whitened balls for every 'cast' were particularly attentive, knowing well that the 'swells' who were playing would be liberal with their coppers at its close. I retained my place under the State House wall with Dufour, where the party was now considerably augmented.

Dufour had introduced me to General Latour, a thin, white-haired, gentlemanly man, of medium height, and with all the air of the *vieux militaire*. He was an old Waterloo officer, and had spent many years in the State House of the Bench. There was also Admiral B——, a short, stout, sailor-like man, but looking much more like the master of a West India trader than an officer in the Royal Navy. He brought his chair out, and was seated in a good position for seeing the game.

'Well, Admiral, and how's the gout?' was the salutation of a red-faced, good-humoured-looking man about five-and-thirty as he strode down the sloping path from the Parade.

'Oh! d—— bad,' was the laconic reply of the old salt. 'Keeping a fellow boxed up here on short allowance of grog plays the very devil with one. That lubber of a Doctor refuses to increase my allowance. If I only had him in blue water I'd double his allowance of the bo'sun's rattan.'

'Come up to my room to-night and I'll give you

a dose that will do you good. You know, Admiral, I keep the right stuff. What do you say, Dufour, will you come too?'

'Well, Captain H ——, I never play except a quiet rubber of whist for penny points,' replied Dufour, 'and the rooms are so small, it's a pity to overcrowd them.'

'Nonsense about overcrowding; come up to-night; and if you don't care about taking a hand you can look on. I came out to see if Dick Martin is going to play this morning. Old Graham and I are to play him and Johnny Broome.

'H——, let me introduce our new man, the tenant of Willis's room. Mr. Brett—Captain H——.'

'Glad to make your aquaintance, but wish it were outside these —— walls. Oh! here's Martin.' And, with a slight inclination of his head, the Captain walked to the State House steps to speak to the Irish editor, who was stripped all ready for playing, and had an old faded dressing-gown thrown carelessly over his shoulders.

'That's the Honorable Captain H——, and were he not such a dissipated fellow he would be a most agreeable companion. He has seen service with his regiment in India, has been wounded, and has his medals. He is a good-hearted fellow, but a most inveterate gambler, and drinks like a fish. I much question his outliving the old Earl, and the money-lenders are as full of post-obits as they care to be.'

A shout and cheer arose from some of the by-standers as the ball, well caught upon his racquet and driven home by S——, struck against the line-board, proclaiming with the sharp sound of the blow

that the rubber was over and Captain P—— beaten. Although all were strangers to me, I could not help a satisfied feeling arising that this ill-looking, handsome dandy was defeated. From the first moment I saw him as he walked down from the door of No. 1 staircase, I felt a dislike to him, and in this instance the first impression was correct.

'Who are these going to play with Martin and H——?' I asked of Dufour.

'The old fellow is Grantham; "G." we generally call him. He has been a lawyer; but, for some reason I know nothing about, the Lord Chancellor for the time being removed his name from the Honourable Roll of solicitors. He is a clever and a crafty old dog, up to every legal move on the board, and I believe knows more law than half the other lawyers put together. Men here go to him for advice in very queer and fishy cases, and he generally hits upon some dodge, some quibble, to get his client out of trouble. By these means and the selling of spirits clandestinely, with a little amusement in the way of breeding canaries, which he turns to profitable account, he manages to make a living in this place. He has been here for years, and evinces no wish to get out.'

'Who is the young fellow? He looks like a gladiator.'

'He is a gladiator by profession; at least what in these days represents those much-vaunted ruffians of old. He is a prize-fighter, and also a publican. That is Johnny Broome; and there, by the side of the racquet-master, stands his brother, Harry Broome.'

'The society of this place is certainly rather mixed,'

I remarked; 'all grades, all professions seem to be represented. It is, as you said this morning, quite a little world of itself.'

'The Broomes, both of them, are, for men of their class, very decent fellows; that is to say, not at all the blackguards most of the prize-ring men are. Harry is only a visitor now, but he has been here as a resident as well as his brother. Look! look! there's a bevy of fine ladies for you; they all come in to see S—— and the C——s.

As Dufour spoke four or five elegantly dressed women came through the lodge-gate and sailed along the pavement of the Parade. One, fairer and bolder-looking than the others, came across the yard, and beckoning with her pale pink-gloved hand, she called, 'Dick, dear, the key. Go on with your game.'

S—— ran and gave her the key—the key of his room; and, speaking in a low tone a few words, he returned to watch the game, while the ladies all went off to his room, from the window of which their fair but impudent faces, without their bonnets, were to be seen a minute or two after.

'That fair girl who came for the key,' said Dufour, 'is the celebrated Baby Jordan; she is young S——'s *chère amie*, and report says he is going to marry her, which will hardly please his sister, Lady ——. Ah! I thought so. You see that young Narcissus, George C——, cannot keep away from the fair ones; there he is in S——'s room with them. Those C——s, when lads, acted as royal pages, and more lovely ones never held the train of a queen or empress, and it is a pity some good angel did not then and there translate them from their

state duties in the Abbey and the Coronation, to Paradise or some other place, and so have prevented them from growing up to be the two young ne'er-do-weels you see them now.'

When the bevy of ladies came in through the lodge-gate, there was in their midst one much more neatly and quietly dressed than the others, and it required no second glance to see how wide a difference there was between the *petite*, lady-like woman who, the moment she passed the officer, dropped the veil of her neat little cottage bonnet, and the bold, laughing crowd of gay butterflies from whom she extricated herself as soon as she could. As they all entered she was, so to speak, greatly mixed up with them, but so soon as they passed on and left her by herself, she was taken possession of by a tall young fellow who had evidently been looking out for her. He seized her hand, and, without letting it go again, drew her arm within his own and walked off hurriedly down the Parade.

'Who are those,' I asked of Dufour: 'the little lady-like creature and, I presume, her husband? They both seem very young.'

'That's young Wallack and his wife; a very different sort of people to the others. I know them well. He has got into a good deal of trouble early in life, and that little wife of his is fighting like a dragon to get him out of the hands of a bad lot and take him out of this place. You must know them. In a quiet way they are two of the nicest people here.'

'Here comes another clerico-looking man,' said I, as a fine tall man of gentlemanly appearance, dressed in black, with a white necktie, walked down the slope,

having just come out of one of the staircases. He lifted his hat to some ladies at a window and displayed a bald head that would have done credit to a bishop. 'Surely you will not tell me that man keeps a sporting public-house? He looks the very personification of a church canon at least, or a leading physician.'

'You are wrong again, Brett, though nearer this time in your guess than in Bob Croft's case. Old Jack Q—— is a solicitor, and never was anyone more befriended by an eminently respectable appearance than he is. If our Government only knew of his peculiar talents, Q—— should be made Ambassador to St. Petersburg at once. I believe he would be a match for any Russian diplomat alive, and that is saying a great deal, for not even the devil himself can lie and distort truth like your genuine Russian. One of these days I will tell you a tale of old P—— that is worthy of either Talleyrand or Nesselrode, and will amuse you.'

Meanwhile the game was proceeding. Martin, apparently so heavy and unwieldy, flew from one part of his court to the other like an acrobat. Old Grantham tried his very best—and he was a good player—to drop the ball in some awkward corner of his antagonist's court, but wherever the ball alighted there was little Martin ready to pick it up with his racquet. Grantham was a lusty man too, and the violent exercise told severely upon him. Captain H—— was a pretty player, but it was evident there was a weakness in one leg, and well there might be, considering how severe had been the wound inflicted by the Sikh horseman's lance. Broome dodged the ball as he would the blows of an antagonist in the prize-ring: wherever the ball

fell in his court 'he was there,' to use a sporting phrase. Like all well-played games it was a long one, every point being well fought for, before being scored by either party. At last it came to an end, to the discomfiture of old Graham and the light-weight Champion, and almost immediately the crowd began to melt away —some to dine, some to lunch. It was feeding-time with all; and wishing to see how my new home was progressing, and being desirous of arranging with Mrs. Clarke, whom I had engaged to 'do for' me, as to the provision of certain necessary things with which to commence my bachelor housekeeping, I wished Dufour and my new acquaintances of the State House good morning and sauntered down the Parade to No. 16 staircase, my own domicile.

In passing one of the rooms on 'our' staircase, the door of which was partly open, I caught sight of little Mrs. Wallack busy in domestic affairs. Without her bonnet she looked a mere girl in her teens. Over her fair golden hair was neatly tied a dainty little lace kerchief, from which the bright curls escaped on either side the brighter little face. Her silk dress was carefully pinned up—showing the petticoat beneath—to keep it from the dust and dirt, and she was busily employed in arranging her husband's room with that grace and finish that is inherent in a woman. I passed the room and looked over the banisters as I ascended towards my own room. I saw Wallack himself coming up loaded with a pitcher of water in one hand and a small basket filled with purchases he had been making at the baker's and greengrocery stall in the other. I heard her exclamation as he entered the room, 'I

am all ready, dear,' and closed the door; and I could not help drawing a comparison between the virtuous coziness of the room I had just passed and the revelry that I knew was going on at that front room on the Parade, where, as I walked below the window, I had heard the piano rattling away and the hollow laughing of the gay beauties who came in with Mrs. Wallack.

CHAPTER X.

RINGING THE CHANGES.

In a few days I was set to rights in my room, which I found very comfortable, and I soon fell into the way of Bench life and formed several acquaintances.

When I had been there a week I was one evening surprised, on passing near the Receiving Ward, to hear my name called, and on going to the window, to find that Fred Whiffin had come over from Whitecross Street.

'I told you I should be soon after you, old fellow,' said he. 'When you left the place was a desert, and only a choice of two things was before me: to follow you, or hang myself with my braces on a meat-hook under the pump-shed. They tell me you have got the finest room in the place. The old party who brought you over—old Busted or Husted—kindly performed the same polite office for me, and, you see, has ably and conscientiously carried out his duty. Well, old fellow, how do you like the place? Very different, isn't it, from the one you have left?'

'Compared to that place it is a perfect heaven,' was my reply.

'I wanted to come to your room, but the starchy old codger at the gate wouldn't hear of such a thing. I must stay here till the morning and get used to the

Surrey air. It's very considerate of them, no doubt, but I was greatly disappointed, and am now very glad you have found me out. I hear there are a lot of capital fellows here—both the C——s, and Dick S——, and George K——, and young B——, who had the Olympic. Do you know any of them?'

'I know some of them, but not the last two you mention. The others, my dear Fred, are not quite the sort for you, if you will allow me to advise you.'

'Too fast, eh?'

'Yes, much too fast for such as you and me—at least I speak for myself.'

'All right, Paterfamilias. I hear you can find society in this place congenial to every disposition, and can spend your evenings either at a prayer-meeting or a miniature gambling hell, where hazard and roulette are played for stakes quite astounding to us poor devils of insolvent debtors.'

'Yes, I hear there is a good deal of both roulette and hazard going on in one or two rooms; but it is not in my way, and I have seen nothing of it.'

'Then, old boy, we'll go together and take care of each other. I'm determined to see all that is to be seen here, and that, if all's true one hears, is a good deal.'

'You spoke just now of B——; do you know him?' I asked.

'Oh, yes, I know him. He's actor, author, and manager; writes his own pieces, acts the principal parts himself to empty benches; for not even giving the people orders for nothing would tempt them to come and see such awful bosh. He came into a little lot of money

—some thousands—took the Olympic, with the idea of educating the public taste and showing them what true genius was; but the British public is stupid above all things, and preferred the worn-out old plays of Bill Shakespeare and the acting of Macready, Vandenhoff, and Phelps to what he provided in Wych Street. But nothing would tempt them—not even a masterpiece with five murders, all perpetrated before the footlights —and it was a merciful Providence that directed the steps of the Sheriff's officer to his lodgings and conveyed him here before he wrote another play with ten murders.'

'Ah, Fred, I see you're as great a rattletrap as ever.'

'If you don't know B—— I do; and I must introduce you. He's capital fun. I expect he feels himself inspired within these walls. I should not be surprised if he eschews tragedy and goes in for writing a comedy to rival Boucicault's "London Assurance." Other writers have done good work here; William Coombe wrote his 'Adventures of Dr. Syntax' within these precious walls; Haydon painted his 'Mock Election' when locked up here, and Kit Smart, the poet, died here.'

The next morning, so soon as the gates were open, Whiffin came to my room and breakfasted with me. In the course of the day he got into his own room, a back one, on the same staircase as mine.

I had not yet attempted to play racquets, but as soon as Fred was settled down, nothing would do but that I should go and try with him how we could play. Seeing the courts disengaged, we went to the racquet-master and arranged for a game, he lending us racquets and providing balls. Like a good many more games,

it appears wondrous easy, to lookers-on, but the tyro soon finds that what looks so easy is far otherwise.

Fred's difficulty was in hitting the ball at all, and several lookers-on suggested that there must be a hole in his racquet, through which the trial ball escaped. My difficulty was of another kind. I had not got hold of the *proper knack* of striking, and as I struck each ball it flew far away over the wall.

'Ru—ler! ru—ler!' shrieked one of the boys attending the court, and the other took to his heels and disappeared.

'You must strike forwards, sir, not upwards,' said the racquet-master, stepping forward and showing me. 'Every ball will go over, *out of rules*, if you hit them up like that.'

A fresh ball was thrown in, and Fred went in and served it. I watched it, struck at it, and sent it after the other flying over the wall, *cheveaux de frise*, and wire netting, to the great amusement of the by-standers and the intense gratification of the young demon of a boy, who shrieked again, 'Ru—ler! ru—ler!'

I could have sworn I heard the echo of his voice on the other side of the wall. Each time I *ruled* the ball the boy's delight increased. At last I began to do better and send the ball in the desired direction *against* the wall. Growing in confidence, I struck less carefully, and no less than three balls were fast wedged in the wire-netting.

'Ruler! ruler!' the boy cried, but not at all with the same gusto, and the reason I was not long in divining. At the conclusion of our game, which had lasted about an hour, we had to settle with the racquet-

master, who demanded fourpence each for eleven balls. The rejoicing of the impish boys when the balls flew over the wall was explained. They fell in the road between the two high walls, and these, so soon as he saw my style of play, his companion had gone and picked up as fast as they came over. *He* could go there. *I* could not. Those balls wedged in the netting were lost fish to the boys, though I saw them from my window throwing up stones at the wire-work to try and shake them out; but my blows were hard, and they were all fixed in tight. I found most beginners do this at first, and the boys look out eagerly for the noviciate of fresh comers in racquets as a certain harvest, as, of course, though full price is charged for the balls, they all do again. In time I became a tolerably fair player, and found the exercise very beneficial.

Fred Whiffin, who was very active and an excellent runner, went in, not only for racquets, at which he became a very proficient player, but for races and all sorts of athletic sports, his principal rival being a good-looking young fellow, George K——, who in the midst of sowing his wild oats had found himself suddenly arrested, and his career of extravagance cut short. Whiffin and K—— were very good friends, and if any mischief were on hand they were sure to be engaged in it. Both were wild though not vicious young men, in the heyday of youth, neither being five-and-twenty, and some of their escapades occasionally got them into trouble with the ruling powers. Both at sundry times visited the Strong Room, where the Governor had the power of confining those who had transgressed the rules of the establishment; and very properly so, too, for without some

controlling power, and that a strong one, the place would have been, if possible, worse than Whitecross Street.

Many of their tricks resembled old College jokes. One night these two and a few others got the lamplighter's ladder and went along the Parade taking down the flowerpots and the various things hanging outside the windows on the first floor, such as game, poultry, fish, meat, &c. These they changed, putting everything up in some other man's window. The confusion and hubbub that took place in the morning, can, as the newspapers say, be better imagined than described. The astonishment of the man who had hung a brace of pheasants or grouse at his window, on finding a string of red herrings in their place, was only equalled by that of the man who, on going to his window to get the usual bloater for his breakfast, found, instead of fish, a nice leg of Welsh mutton or pair of wild ducks. Some took the thing in good part and laughed, and some were furious. Complaints to the Governor were threatened by more than one, but I never heard that any notice was taken of it by the authorities.

One very interesting little affair resulted from it. At the window of one man, who was poor, and had several children and a wife, for whom it was frequently hard work to provide for the wants of the day, instead of a string of onions, which had hung there when his wife closed the window and made all snug for him before taking her departure for the night, now to her great astonishment, when on going in to her husband's room and opening the window, she drew up the blind, the onions were gone and a most beautiful goose was hanging on one side and a small ham on the other. The children's

sharp eyes spied out the treasures from the outside as they passed and looked up before ascending the stairs, and thought that some good fairy, perhaps Santa Claus, had been paying papa a visit. Mrs. Smith (let us call her) was an unbeliever in fairies, and had no faith in Santa Claus. She had a shrewd suspicion of the facts of the case; and, much as she would have liked to have given husband and little ones a rasher from the ham for their breakfasts, she resisted all temptations, turning a deaf ear to the assurances of little Miss Annie 'that she was sure it was an angel or a fairy who had sent them, for it was just like what she had read.' It was not long before the owners of the goose and the ham discovered their loss. Captain B——, from whose window the ham had been taken, simply sent round his laundress to inquire for it and bring it back. She did so, and the poor children cried at losing it.

Presently a tap came to the door, and in walked a young fellow named Whittaker—Harry Whittaker—who had run an extravagant course at College and been arrested for some of his debts. Harry's father, though he would not pay his debts, continued him a very liberal allowance, and he was enabled to live as a gentleman. It was generally reported that his father intended to keep him in the Bench for a year or more, in hopes that it would punish him for his extravagance at College, and that he would return home a steady young man when it pleased his highness to settle with the creditors and release him. It is a pity the old gentleman did not come and stop a month in the Bench too, and then he would have seen the sort of 'finishing education' his boy was receiving.

I left Whittaker in search of his goose and just entering Smith's room. On entering and seeing the group of hungry children and the unmistakable signs of poverty, he was struck with surprise. A look of one of the little ones at the goose as she was munching a thick slice of bread-and-treacle, struck a chord in Harry Whittaker's heart.

'Why, you look, little missy, as if you would like the goose yourself,' he said to her.

'Yeth, thir, I think I thould. We never tasted goothe.'

'Then you shall taste that one, little lady; and if your mother will stuff it, I'll tell Joe Colwell to cook it and put it down to me.'

'Oh, thank you, sir, but we could not think of such a thing,' was Mrs. Smith's reply.

'Nonsense; I have goose often, and it will be a treat for the children. What's the matter with you, little man?' And Harry, feeling in his pocket for some coppers, addressed himself to a little pale-faced boy, who was crying.

'I like ham more than doose; I want the ham. And the little fellow began to cry outright.

'Ham? What ham?' asked Whittaker.

Mrs. Smith, taking the sobbing youngster on her lap, explained to Whittaker the astonishment of them all to find on drawing up the blind the goose and a fine ham, from which one end was cut, hanging at the window. She told also how the children thought it must have come from Santa Claus; and while picturing to themselves how nice a rasher would be for breakfast Captain B——'s laundress had called and fetched it away.

'Oh, that's all, is it? Well, my little man, you

can come round to my room—14 in 12—in the after noon, and I'll see what I can do for you.'

Harry withdrew, glad to get away from the profuse thanks for his present of the goose. In the afternoon the child was at his door sure enough; and, to his unspeakable delight, after having both his hands filled with cakes, he was taken back by Harry's laundress, who carried in her arms a beautiful sixteen-pound ham, which she delivered to Mr. Smith, with Mr. Whittaker's compliments, and he thought it a pity the little folks should be disappointed about the ham.

After this the Smiths' children were frequent visitors to Whittaker's room, and things that before were either thrown away or else carried off by the laundress, now furnished many a nice little dinner for Mrs. Smith and her children, when otherwise theirs would have been but a Barmecide feast.

One evening Dufour called in, and we had a pipe together. I reminded him that he had mentioned having a tale to tell of the canonical-looking lawyer Q——.

'Ah! yes, so I have,' said he. 'I'll refill my pipe and tell you.'

'Of course you know there are many things done by us all that should not be done, and by rich young military men in particular. A certain gallant young officer in the Guards—who, for the sake of all parties, shall be nameless—was about to be married, and well married. The match was one of the best of the season. Both parties had rank and money too. What more could be desired? The Benedick, however, had been a wild dog in his day, and before he could enter into the holy bonds of matrimony, was very anxious to wash his hands of a

little affair that had now assumed the shape of an incumbrance.

'Mary Dobson was pretty, but foolish, and instead of listening to the true vows of Robert Haines, a young cabinet-maker, she turned a willing ear to the dashing young Guardsman, with the usual result. For a time he was pleased with his toy and spared no expense upon her; in fact, the girl was treated as a lady, and rode in her brougham. In course of time the relatives of our Guardsman, and those of the titled and wealthy lady, thought how well-matched a pair they would be, and all the arrangements for the marriage were made. What to do with Mary Dobson and her little one, he did not know; so he walked himself off, leaving her a handsome cheque. She saw the announcement of the approaching marriage of her—"friend," I believe, is the proper term.

'Her relatives kept a *blanchisserie* in Soho, and though English themselves, kept up the appearance of a French establishment, many of the *blanchisseuses* being French. One evening Mrs. Dickson, the wife of Joe Dickson, whom you will probably see here when the racquet match season comes on, called at the *blanchisserie* in Soho on some business concerning her own and Joe's laundry arrangements. It was dusk, and no light of any sort was in the place. Mrs. Joe, who was tired, sat down in the shop; and her attention being attracted by voices within, she sat still and quietly listened. Then she heard how, Polly Dobson having been thrown off by the faithless "son of Mars," her old swain, Robert Haines, had again pressed his suit, and so far successfully that they were to be married the very next

day, and, with the child, were to start for America at once; Polly having turned all she could into money, with which and Haines' savings they intended doing great things in the New World.

'Joe Dickson's wife is a clever woman, and saw at a glance that if properly handled the information she had obtained would be a gold-mine. Home she goes to Joe, and it did not take him long to see that with such information in their possession, the young Guardsman was to be "squeezed" to a pretty tune. The question was how to do it without getting into any legal bother—how to steer clear of all transgression of the law. No threats, no attempts at extortion could be used.

'One name suggested itself to both of them, and away went Dickson next morning to Jack Q——'s office Joe knew his man to a nicety, and was quite aware he must place confidence in him from the first. A bargain was struck: Q—— was to work the matter, and to give the Dicksons two-thirds of whatever sum could be got out of the Guardsman. A thousand pounds was suggested, and the matter was left in Q——'s hands.

'In the course of a fortnight Joe Dickson received a note from Q——, asking him to give him a call.

'Joe was there punctually to time; and Q——, opening his table-drawer, took out a bundle of nice, new, fresh, crisp banknotes, and handed Dickson 665*l.*

'"There, Dickson, is your share—two-thirds of a thousand pounds."

'Joe took the notes, counted them, folded them, and placed them in his pocket. Then, looking over his glasses steadily at Q——, he asked, "Now, tell me how you did it?"

'"Well," said Q——, "I'll begin at the beginning. After I saw you I went in the evening to the Dobsons' place in Soho, and in reply to a few questions found that the man Haines had really married the girl, and that they had started for New York by a sailing-packet from London; but, stupid-like, no one could tell me the name of the ship. Next morning I called at Lloyds, ascertained the names of the two ships that had sailed for New York on that day, and found that only one carried passengers. On calling at the agent's, I found the names of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Haines and child on the list of second cabin passengers. I watched the papers for two days, and then saw in the shipping intelligence that the American ship *Rappahannock* had left the Downs and passed the Isle of Wight. That evening I went down to Windsor, where the Captain and Lieut.-Colonel's battalion was stationed, and, finding his quarters, sent up my card. I saw, the moment I opened out the business, that he was frightened out of his wits. I represented that I wished to act as a friend and a father to him, and save him from the continual demands of unscrupulous extortioners. I also represented that Haines, the girl's former lover, swore revenge, and wanted to make a good thing out of him, and was only waiting for the wedding to take place, to commence a system of annoyance in Polly's name."

'"'What do you advise me to do?' he asked.

'"'Make a clean breast of it,' was my answer: 'tell your father everything, and so take the sting out of it.'

'"'God forbid!' he exclaimed, jumping up and pacing the room.

'"I saw at once the weak point; that he was pre-

pared to make any sacrifice rather than either his father or the Lady father should know anything. So I pressed him all the more.

"'My dear sir,' I said to him, 'I can well understand your repugnance to making such a revelation to your father. Let me do it, therefore. I will call on him to-morrow.'

"'Oh, Lord! no,' he cried. 'Do no such thing. Cannot you contrive to settle the thing quietly?'

"'Well, if you will place yourself in my hands, and furnish me with a thousand pounds, I will try my best.'

"'A thousand pounds!' He seemed staggered at the sum.

"'If you cannot conveniently find that sum, it will be far better for me to wait upon your father, as I first suggested.'

"'Oh, no, no! I wouldn't have my father know of it for ten thousand.'

"'At last," said old Q——, "I quieted him down and laid my proposal before him. It was that if he found £1,000 and my expenses, I would undertake that Haines should marry her, that they should go out to Australia, and that I would see them off myself. He was to take the night to consider it, and see what money he could provide. I left him, promising to be with him at half-past eight, before morning parade, and went to my hotel. The next morning, just as I expected, there was a cheque for the money. I took it, and promised to go down to Liverpool and see the people off; and I did go."

"'You did go!" exclaimed Dickson. "What, to Liverpool? What for?"

'"Did you not notice the address of the note I wrote you making this appointment?" said P——.

'Dickson drew his pocket-book from his pocket, found Q——'s letter, and saw it was dated from the Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool, and bore the Liverpool post-mark, neither of which had attracted his attention before.

'"Of course I went to Liverpool. Did I not promise Colonel —— I would do so and see the people off? I went down there on purpose to write him from the Adelphi, and I sent him the name of a ship that had sailed for Port Philip that day, and pointed out to him that, for prudential reasons, they had embarked under another name. The letter set his mind entirely at rest, and he will never have the least suspicion of the case. I see by this morning's paper," he continued, pushing the "Times" over to Dickson, "that Colonel —— was married at St. George's yesterday."

'Dickson buttoned up his coat and went straight home. He laid the notes on the table before his wife, told her all that Q—— had told him, and asked her what she thought of it.

'"Why, that old Jack has drawn at least two thousand from that fool, if not more."

'"The devil you do!" said Joe. "Then he ought to stand more."

'"Not he," replied his wife. "You named one thousand, and two-thirds as your share, and the old fellow has carried out his bargain."'

'Now, what do you think of that, my friend?' said Dufour. 'I don't think any diplomatist going would have beaten Master Jack Q——. I can just picture

him, with that eminently respectable bald head of his and white cravat, offering his services to go to the Colonel's father and giving his advice as "a friend."'

'Do you think Mrs. Dickson was right,' I asked, 'and that he did get two thousand?'

'I should not be surprised if he got three. One thing is very certain: he has been in good feather ever since, and directly after the affair took a house near Russell Square, and furnished it from top to bottom. Before then he lived in lodgings.'

CHAPTER XI.

A ROMANCE IN CHANCERY.

AFTER I had been at 'Belvedere Place' some two months, I received a note from the solicitors who were carrying on old Mr. Harrison's affairs, saying their managing clerk would call on me that day on important business.

While I was yet conjecturing what time he was likely to call a tap was heard at my door, and a sharp, weazel-faced little fellow, who absolutely smelt of law, stepped in.

'He had come from Mr. Fairfax, of Messrs. Bidborough and Fairfax, of Southampton Buildings, who had taken up the business of the late Mr. Harrison, and who, he presumed I knew, had my affairs in hand.'

I bowed acquiescence and motioned him to a chair.

'I shall be glad to hear how matters are progressing, for, as doubtless you know, I am only waiting the realisation of my uncle's property, or at least my share of it, to leave this country for New South Wales. I do not wish to idle one day more in this place than I am obliged to do.'

'Well, sir, great progress is making, and our Mr. Fairfax, in order to push the matter forward, has filed a friendly bill in Chancery, and it will be necessary for you to attend before the Lord Chancellor for examination, *vivâ voce*. For this purpose we have taken out a

habeas corpus, and you will have to come up with the tipstaff to-morrow morning to the Court in Lincoln's Inn.' [9]

He explained to me the points upon which I was to be examined, and said it was quite a matter of form, and would only take a few minutes. He had the *habeas* with him, and if I would walk down to the office he would lodge it at once, and arrange for the tipstaff to be in attendance, so that I could be at the Court by ten o'clock.

We went to the office outside the gate, and there I acknowledged I was the person named in the *habeas*, and was told to be ready to go with Husted at half-past nine in the morning.

The clerk's visit quite cheered me up; it seemed to bring a hope of having matters settled. I had seen quite enough of the Bench to satisfy curiosity.

The morning came, and I was all ready to start when Husted arrived.

'Now, sir,' said he, 'you need not mind me. You walk on, and I'll just keep you in view. It is to the Chancellor's Court, in Lincoln's Inn, we have to go. When we get there we shall soon know when we are likely to be wanted.'

'Ten o'clock is the hour named,' I said.

'Ah, yes, sir, that's all very well, but it may be four in the afternoon before you are wanted.'

Away we started, and so soon as we got into the bustling streets the noise of the passing vehicles quite bewildered me at first. I had no idea that so short a period of quiet retirement in the Bench would have had so great an effect.

At last we arrived at the Court, where Mr. Fairfax and his clerk were waiting for me. The counsel, in their wigs and gowns, were bustling in and out, and a great many people were crowding into the Court.

Mr. Fairfax bade me follow him, and we got to a comfortable seat behind the counsel. He told me there was a special case of a ward in Chancery to come on, and probably it would take the greater part of the day. But it might be finished at any moment, and then I should be wanted.

A commotion took place. All the counsel rose; the Lord Chancellor and his attendants came in. The Bench bowed to the Bar, and the Bar bowed to the Bench. All the usual formalities took place, including the man calling for silence. Up jumped one counsel and muttered something to his Lordship, afterwards handing in what looked like a brief to the clerk sitting at a table. The same was repeated by another counsel, and then his Lordship asked if all the parties in Lermitte *v.* Browne and Regina *v.* Robson were present. They were present.

'Mr. Kaynes, do you produce the defendant?'

'I do, my lud,' replied that gentleman, standing up. 'Step forward, Mr. Robson.'

A smart-looking young fellow, who looked anything but comfortable in his prominent position, here advanced to the table in front of his Lordship, who eyed him most attentively, and thus addressed him:

'Defendant Robson, you will not leave this Court, sir.' Then, turning to another counsel, he asked, 'Do you produce the ward in question, Sir George?'

'I do, my lud.' And Sir George, rising, looked all about for his client, whom he evidently did not know from

Eve; but the solicitor in the case led forward a fair girl, over whose young head apparently not more than seventeen summers had passed. All eyes were turned upon her, and she blushed to the very roots of her hair.

'Let your client be seated, Sir George,' said his Lordship, and she waited no further instructions, but sat down at once, seemingly anxious to hide herself from the public gaze. Her great anxiety seemed to be to catch the eye of the defendant; but he looked as if he could not take his eyes off the Chancellor, and stood rooted to the spot.

What crime had these young people been guilty of? was my first thought, and I endeavoured to pick up some idea of the case from the speeches of the counsel, but that was utterly hopeless. They seemed to vie with each other in stringing the most inexplicable legal sentences together; so I gave it up, and directed my attention to looking at the fair criminal—as I supposed her to be—and her friends; for she was attended by three ladies, one of whom evidently was her mother.

For two mortal hours this went on, now and then interrupted and relieved with a remark from the Chancellor. I could at last gather that they were going through some wills and marriage settlements that might have some connection with the ancestors of the two delinquents, but I entirely failed to make out anything relating to either of them.

At last the luncheon-hour arrived, and we all left the Court. Mr. Fairfax asked me to accompany him, as he wished to speak with me; and after hearing from him how my matters were now placed, I asked him what the case being argued was all about.

'Oh,' said he, 'it is a very romantic affair—nothing more or less than the running away with and marrying a ward in Chancery; and that, you must know, is a very grave offence. I quite expect that young gentleman will be committed, and if so he will go back with you to the Bench. Some Lord Chancellors would have sent him to Newgate.'

I asked what he was to be imprisoned for, as he seemed to have acted honourably and married the young lady.

'Yes, but there are settlements to be made, and both parties are under age. The lady is entitled to large property, and it is incumbent that it should be settled upon her under certain special covenants. The young husband is not yet of age, and till he is so, cannot legally execute the necessary settlements. Were he to refuse it would lead to great litigation, and so I expect his Lordship will commit him to prison till he attains his majority and executes the settlements to the full satisfaction of the Court.'

'And what will become of the lady?' I asked.

'Oh, she will be placed in the custody of guardians, and perhaps his Lordship will inhibit her visiting her young husband in prison. We shall see.'

We all returned to the Court.

The proceedings were resumed; and after some two hours, during which the learned Lord Chancellor had apparently been enjoying a comfortable *siesta*, with slight intervals of wakefulness, which he devoted to scrutinising his charming young ward, one of the counsel wound up by saying, 'That is our case, my lud.'

This roused his Lordship, who immediately 'pulled himself together' and commenced a long address, in which, greatly to my astonishment and admiration, he not only unravelled the two incoherent and unintelligible harangues of the leading counsel, but actually made out a perfectly comprehensible tale. From it we learned that through the death of the two uncles and the father of the young lady—who now seemed to me to be all eyes and curls—the whole property of her paternal grandfather devolved upon her; that on the remarriage of her mother, when the girl was but a mere child of ten years old, some former friend of her father's, who did not approve of the second marriage, and feared the stepfather would make inroads into the property, took proceedings, as the 'infant's' next friend, to throw the whole estate into Chancery: whereupon the mother's guardianship of her child ceased, the latter becoming the ward of the Lord Chancellor.

Then came forward the knotty point, and the cause of the trouble now brought about by the marriage while under age and without the consent of the Lord Chancellor. It appeared that a former occupier of the Woolsack had acceded to a petition of the mother to have charge of her child and the superintendence of her education, having a very handsome allowance granted her out of the estate for the maintenance of the young lady.

The history of how the two young people first met, how the 'defendant' in the present case wooed and won his fair young bride, his Lordship did not relate to the Court, leaving his hearers to fill up from their own imaginations all the details of the romantic story—very

much to the disappointment, I could see, of many of the public in court, some of whom had evidently come purposely to hear all the details of the elopement, if such a term can be given to the quietly going off of a young couple to be married in an adjoining parish, with the full consent and cognisance of the lady's mother and stepfather. At last his Lordship arrived at the pith of his story or judgment, which was precisely as Mr. Fairfax had foretold.

'The defendant,' said his Lordship, 'has been guilty of a grave breach of the law and contempt of this Court by entering into marriage with a ward during her minority. The offence in this case is greatly aggravated by the fact that the defendant is at present incapable of making due and proper amends for his acts by entering into and executing the settlements of the property, that this Court requires shall be made, to duly appointed trustees on behalf of the ward and her lawful issue, in consequence of the defendant not being of full age and still being himself an infant. The marriage that has taken place, it is not in the power of this Court to annul, and it must stand; but in order to protect its ward, the judgment of the Court is that the defendant, Edward William Robson, be committed to the custody of the officer of the Court, to convey him to the Queen's Prison, there to keep him in safe care and durance until he shall have fully purged his contempt of this Court, and have executed the settlements of our ward's estate to the full satisfaction of the Court. So soon as the defendant is of full age and competent legally to execute the same, he may petition the Court for leave to enter into such settlements as the Court shall approve. Is there an officer in court?'

Here Husted moved forward, and the counsel, whom his Lordship had addressed as 'Sir George,' made some observations *sotto voce* to the counsel on the other side. He spoke to the solicitor seated beneath him, and that gentleman stood up beside Robson, the defendant, and apparently explained to him that he was in Husted's custody. From the defendant, my attention was diverted to the fair ward, whose large blue eyes were now filled with tears, and whose cheeks were far whiter than any lily. Her little hands were clenched, and I expected every moment she was going to treat us to a scene and faint. As Husted stepped forward, she gave a little start of horror, and if ever I read another's thoughts she was quite expecting to see her young husband loaded with chains and handcuffs and dragged off to the Tower. At this moment a diversion was made by the junior counsel behind Sir George, who rose and, with his brief in one hand and a pen in the other, ready to record the dreadful sentence, asked his Lordship:

'Does your Lordship inhibit the ward of the Court, for whom I have the honour to appear, from visiting or communicating with the defendant while in custody?'

The poor girl looked up horror-struck, and glanced in a most beseeching way at the Chancellor.

The defendant, or delinquent, or prisoner, whichever he now was, Edward William Robson, also looked anxiously from the other side of the Court, and held his breath pending the Lord Chancellor's reply.

'I make no order on that point. The judgment of the Court will stand as given.'

Both the interested parties looked in blank wonderment, neither in the least comprehending the significance of his Lordship's words.

'What is the next case?' asked his Lordship.

Mr. Fairfax bustled me forward. The counsel, a thick-set, elderly man, who was representing my interests commenced to address the Bench.

I had just time to notice that a few words of explanation from Sir George to his fair client, had caused a change to come over her face, and that smiles mingled with the tears which now she made no attempt to conceal. The husband's face I did not see, as he had turned round to converse with his solicitor.

My counsel, after speaking in a low voice for a couple of minutes, handed in some papers to his Lordship, and I was directed to stand at the table immediately below the Chancellor's seat.

He read over the papers, asked me two or three questions as to the dates of my father's and uncle's deaths, and without more ado told my counsel his application was granted.

His Lordship rose and bowed to the Bar. The robed and bewigged counsel all rose too, and bowed to his Lordship, who at once retired. The day's proceedings so far were over. In my case the cost of getting the order required and my going up under *habeas*, I afterwards noted, when, having nothing else to do one day at sea, I amused myself with looking over the bill of costs of Messrs. Fairfax & Bidborough, was 27*l.* 3*s.* 2*d.* Truly law is an expensive thing.

There was no inhibition against the young couple seeing each other—no hindrance to their free communication; and there they were, seated side by side, surrounded by friends and lawyers, arranging what was to be done about 'Edward's' going to prison. I noticed that they were alluding to me in some of their conversa-

tion. Their solicitor had evidently informed them that I was an inmate of the dreadful Queen's Prison. He went over to Mr. Fairfax, and after a few words with him they came to me together. Fairfax introduced the other lawyer to me as Mr. Forbes.

'If you will allow me I will introduce you to my clients, for I now reckon both Mr. and Mrs. Robson in that light. It will be a very great satisfaction to her if you can assure her it is not a very dreadful place, and that she will be able to see her husband to-morrow.'

I was duly introduced to both Mr. and Mrs. Robson, also to the lady's mother and stepfather, who had now made their appearance—Mr. and Mrs. Danebury. I did my best to reply to all their numerous questions, and promised Mrs. Robson to take the best care of her young husband till she could see him the next morning.

Husted intimated that it would be as well if we moved, as he would have to go to the Mitre again with his new charge. His son, young George, was also with him. A tender good-bye was said. Mr. Danebury and the ladies and their friends went off in two cabs. After seeing them drive off I shook hands with Mr. Fairfax, who promised to get matters settled for me with all possible speed; and then, taking young Robson by the arm, we walked off through the old gateway into Chancery Lane and down to the Mitre, followed by the Husteds, Pere et fils.

There the usual 'refreshing' process was gone through while the tipstaff got Robson's order of committal entered up, or endorsed, or something else legally required, when we all four got into a cab, young George mounting beside the Jehu, and drove to 'No. 1 Belvidere Place.'

CHAPTER XII.

FAMILY HISTORY.

In a few weeks I got very intimate with the Robsons, and also with the Wallacks; and after the society I had mixed with at Whitecross—much of which was, to say the least, of a shady character—the contrast was most striking. Bohemianism, to a moderate extent, I have no objection to; but a great deal of the Bench society, and particularly some of the fairer portion of it, was certainly more Alsatian than Bohemian; and amid it all the intimacy with a few nice people like the Wallacks and Robsons and my good Mentor, Dufour, was most enjoyable. Amid so much that was questionable in every way, and which it was impossible to avoid mixing with—not that I am in the least squeamish or thin-skinned—I found the society of these young folks refreshing beyond measure—like a clear draught of iced water after the throat and tongue have been heated with wine.

Fred Whiffin did not enjoy their friendship as I did; and, much against my advice and efforts to prevent him, he threw himself more into the company of a more rackety set.

Such varied scenes and society are not to be met with in any other place of the same dimensions in this world.

Young Robson wanted three months of his majority,

and for those three months at least he was doomed for certain to reside in the Bench. He was in consequence always called the 'Infant' by everyone in the place, being so, in fact, according to law.

Mrs. Robson came every day, Sundays not excepted, to visit her imprisoned husband. The Lord Chancellor had stated it was not in the power of the Court to annul the marriage, and she took care nothing should keep her away from her husband.

She had her own carriage, and, either alone or in the company of her mother or one of her aunts, drove down from Maida Hill every morning. By eleven o'clock every day, the Infant was at his station at the entrance lodge, to meet her, and rarely had he many minutes to wait before her arrival, followed by a servant with a loaded basket, for she was greatly afraid her Edward would be starved.

It was in my room that Robson first met young Wallack, and they were soon very intimate, as also were their better halves.

Wallack had got into trouble through having placed unlimited confidence in a man who had introduced clients to him in his business of a stockbroker, who turned out to be men of straw when losses came upon them. This man had represented these clients to be men of wealth and position, and Wallack, who was a member of the Stock Exchange, entered into extensive liabilities on their account. Very luckily for the two he had effected a settlement on his wife at the time of their marriage, or their home would have been broken up. After waiting in the Bench for over two months, trying to arrange with a hostile creditor, with whom

the very man who had caused his ruin was on intimate terms, and who would listen to no reason, but rather seemed actuated by some motive of spite, a friend, who was also a creditor, determined to cut the Gordian knot of his difficulties, and a little while after Christmas made young Wallack a bankrupt, whereupon he was at once liberated and left the Bench. In the Bankruptcy Court the opposition of his unfriendly creditor was of no avail; and shortly before I left England, I had the pleasure of seeing him make a new start in life, with good prospects of success, and, I am sure, of happiness too, for never have I seen a more devoted couple or a young wife more calculated to make a man's home a happy one. Mrs. Wallack's energy was wonderful. It was, indeed, through her that the friendly creditor took the steps he did, which by making her husband a bankrupt, ultimately freed him not only from prison but from liabilities which his bad advisers urged him to arrange in such a way that would have been a millstone round his neck for years to come, and most probably would have ruined him for life.

The Robsons were altogether different in their circumstances and prospects. Young Robson held an appointment in a Government office, the prestige of which afforded him a passport to excellent society, while his salary, augmented by a small allowance from the trustees under his father's will, enabled him to live and dress as a gentleman.

Edward Robson's office was in Somerset House—in the Admiralty Department—and among the houses where he was received as a welcome visitor was that of Mr. Robert Knight, of Woburn Place, a great favourite

with everyone who knew him, being a good-natured fellow, whom nothing could put out of temper—not even his sister-in-law, and that is saying a good deal.

It was at Knight's house, in Woburn Place, that Robson first met the fair ward in Chancery, to whom he lost his heart before he knew the extent of her property. Strange as it may seem, none of the parties were aware of the full extent of the property till the Chancery proceedings were instituted.

Mrs. Danebury, the mother of Mrs. Robson, was a sister of Mrs. Knight; her first husband, a Mr. Theophilus Browne, being the father of Mrs. Robson *née* Ellen Browne, the fair ward in Chancery.

Mr. Browne was one of three sons of an old East India merchant and a director of the East India Company, who had amassed great wealth during a quarter of a century's residence on the banks of the Godavery. The old man's great ambition had been to found a family; and having three sons, he had every reason to hope his ambition would be realised. He left his property to his three sons, with certain strange provisoes as to their power of willing it away—which they were bound to do only to a descendant of himself. The two elder sons, Elijah and Isaac, both died bachelors, Elijah preceding Isaac by only one year. At the time of their deaths Theophilus was married, but had no child, though one was expected, when the news of Isaac's loss at sea reached England.

Theophilus, unlike his brothers, one of whom entered the army in the Company's service, and the other the Royal Navy, embarked in commerce and became a produce-broker, though following his business solely for the

sake of occupation, having a good income from his portion of his father's property, the bulk of which, however, was not realised till some years after the death of all three of the sons of old Caleb Browne. Ellen Browne being then an infant, and the affairs being thrown into Chancery, the estate was quickly and advantageously realised almost without the cognisance of the friends of the ward in whose interest the machinery of the Court of Chancery was working. When the proceedings relative to the friendly bill took place, and also those in connexion with the motion I had heard before the Chancellor, resulting in young Robson's committal to prison, came to be thoroughly gone into, the great extent of the property realised, and duly invested in the hands of the Accountant-General, took everyone by surprise, and no one more so than the fortunate bridegroom himself, unless it were his mother-in-law and her husband, Mr. Danebury. The least interested was the fair young ward herself, who would willingly have given half her property to have been allowed to take her dear boy-husband away from the Bench to some quiet place. I heard the probable income of the young couple named at all sorts of figures—from ten to five-and-twenty thousand a year.

Directly the full extent of the property became known, Mr. Danebury commenced proceedings in his wife's name, with the endeavour to get an increase made in her jointure or allowance, but with what result I never heard. The only end that was attained, to my knowledge, was a growing coldness between Mr. Danebury and all the rest of the family, especially in regard to Robson and his young wife's uncle, Robert Knight.

Mr. Robert Knight, or 'Bob,' as everybody would persist in calling him, held a very comfortable appointment in the Civil department of Her Majesty's service devoted to stamps and taxes; and between his office at Somerset House and his home in Woburn Place, he had hitherto passed through life as easily and as free from the ordinary annoyances and troubles of this world as most men—a great deal more so, indeed. Bob had never had much to ruffle him. When quite a youth, his father had succeeded in getting him into the Stamps and Taxes, and in the course of time he had risen as others died off, till now he found himself, at forty-five years of age, with a snug room to himself in the large pile of buildings looking out towards the Shot-towers standing sentinel on each side of the Surrey end of Waterloo Bridge, with a good income, more than ample for all his wants, and enabling him at times to help a friend without distressing himself, and not over-much work to do for it.

Knight had really taken life easily, and was quite disposed to continue in the same course. He had been, until shortly before the period of young Robson's first meeting with Miss Browne, what the world calls an old bachelor, and had only some two years before I met him married an old maid.

Having lost his father while still a very young man, he resided with his mother, of whom he was the only child. At last the old lady, after being for many years an invalid, died and left Bob a disconsolate orphan at the age of forty, with a neat little sum invested partly in ground-rents and partly in 'the sweet Three per Cents,' together with the house in Woburn Place. The

loss of his mother cut him up severely; and having obtained leave of absence from official duties, he betook himself to Brighton, to try and recruit his downcast spirits. Here he took up his abode at a boarding-house, where among the residents was Miss Priscilla Carter, a lady of very dubious age. She did her best to persuade an unbelieving world that she was thirty, and dressed like twenty; but the register in the family Bible—oh, those dreadful tell-tales, those registers!—unless grievously in error, made her near fifty. Those registers are mostly correct, and we must fain believe the entry in that of the Carter family.

The fair Priscilla, being possessed of an annuity, had little else to do but enjoy the good things of this world to the extent that her income would allow, and to carry out the great end and aim of female life—get a husband.

Whether it was that, having so lately lost the companionship of his invalid mother, the society of Miss Priscilla Carter, who was one of those ladies who fancy it is vulgar to be well and therefore 'enjoy delicate health,' to some extent reminded him of the days gone by, and was therefore congenial to him; or that her arts and wiles had met with more success than previously, certain it is, that after Mr. Knight's leaving Brighton to resume his duties in the snug room at Somerset House, he found himself in correspondence with the lady, and after a very few weeks she too left the seaside and came to reside in town. He found himself visiting her sister, Mrs. Danebury, at Maida Hill, where the fair Priscilla was then staying. Woburn Place seemed dull with no one but his mother's old

servant Margaret to welcome him home to dinner; and although 'Bob had never till now given a second thought to such a thing as matrimony,' he had now and then imagined how pleasant a thing it would be to be welcomed home by a wife.

At last he proposed, and was at once accepted. There was no need for long courtship: they were speedily married, and a very good wife she made him. He was a most affectionate husband. But then Bob Knight was sure to be affectionate. All his friends said that he seemed to have grown younger after his marriage; and though Mrs. Knight certainly had not done so too, every one of her friends and acquaintances congratulated her upon her greatly improved appearance. The great wish of her heart for the last quarter of a century being at last fulfilled, she had no further need to assume a juvenility she had long since lost, and now, instead of being the old maidish, scraggy 'ewe dressed lamb fashion' creature her friends had known her to be for years, she became a really jolly, comfortable middle-aged lady, always giving a warm welcome to Bob's friends at Woburn Place, and was a favourite in every house she visited. She participated largely of her husband's congeniality of spirit; and if she did possess a few little infirmities they were certainly not those of temper, and only tended to remind her dear Robert of his mother dead and gone, but not forgotten.

Mrs. Danebury, her sister, frequently told her friends she never could have believed it possible that anyone could have been so much improved by matrimony as her sister Priscilla.

Mrs. Knight and Mrs. Danebury had an elder sister,

and it was morally certain that no one in his senses would ever attempt to induce Miss Sarah Carter to change *her* state of single blessedness. That lady was still a Vestal, and likely to remain so.

'Aunt Sarah,' as both Mr. and Mrs. Robson called her before her face, or 'Aunt Sally' behind her back, was an oddity, and several years older than either of her sisters. She passed her days between their two houses at Maida Hill and Woburn Place. All her relatives seem to have highly respected her, but loved her better when absent; and when she saw that both her sisters were tired of her, and she herself felt inclined for a change, she would hie away to the old boarding-house at Brighton and become the terror of all its inmates. Miss Carter showed unmistakably that in early life she had been a very fine woman—much the finest of the three sisters. Whether from the effects of an early cross in love years and years ago—which was mysteriously hinted by her friends at times—or some other cause, not known to anyone, she had certain periodical attacks, when her manner was stranger than at others; when, as a friend of young Robson—Frank Boyle, of Guy's—expressed it, 'anything occurred to shift the loose slate on her roof.'

The Knights, Miss Carter, and two or three City friends of the Robsons, were very frequent visitors to the Bench; and as the young people's room did not look over the Parade and racquet courts, they often came to my room. I liked their society and that of the Wallacks; and in order to make my room more convenient for visitors, and at the same time having it in view to adapt myself to colonial life, I turned

Husted's French bedstead out of it and purchased a sailor's hammock in which to sleep. This I slung from two strong iron hooks I had driven into the walls, and in the daytime rolled it up and put it away in one of the cupboards. This, of course, not only made much more room, but removed all appearance of a bedroom, rendering it a much more decorous apartment in which to receive visitors. Miss Carter, whenever she came, always made a point of complimenting me on the good taste I had displayed, and never forgot to thank me for my great kindness in providing a 'drawing-room' for her darling niece and her friends. Many were the very pleasant parties we have had in that room; and there have been times when, had Asmodeus uncovered our roof, no one holding on to his mantle and flying over our heads would have thought No. 12 room, in 16 staircase, was in a prison. I remember the no little surprise, and I think I may also say amusement, of Captain Hudson, the Governor, when one day on going his rounds and knocking at my door, I opened it and bade him walk in. A party, consisting of the two Wallacks, the Robsons, Mrs. Danebury, Miss Carter, and the Knights, together with Dufour, was seated round my table at high tea. He bowed to the ladies, and looked round the room evidently astonished to see no bedstead.

'You are wondering, Captain, where I sleep, I can see; but as I am occasionally honoured with the company of so many ladies I have adopted a sailor's fashion and sling a hammock at night, which I stow away here in the daytime. Opening the cupboard-door as I spoke I showed him my bedding.

'A very good plan too, and one I wonder is not more frequently adopted. Good evening.' And, once more bowing to the ladies, he took his departure.

Either the Governor or deputy came round to make an official call about every fortnight, accompanied by one of the turnkeys. If the parties residing on the staircase which the Governor intends to visit should be on the Parade or racquet ground they are always summoned, so as to be in their rooms when he calls.

My example of the sleeping arrangement was followed by others, but not exactly in the same way. Fred Whiffin, who after a little while had a front room on the same landing as a young fellow named Lawson, arranged his room as a day-room or parlour, and used to sleep in Lawson's room, they having two bedsteads in it. After a while, in consequence of Fred getting into a scrape, which brought him before the Governor, this was put a stop to; but in the case of two men who were friendly and living together, it was certainly very convenient.

CHAPTER XIII.

RESIDENTS ON THE COUNTY SIDE.

In course of time I became acquainted with several of the residents 'at the Back,' as the County or Poor side of the Bench was always called, and there were as many 'characters' there as in the front.

One old man named William Miller had been over forty years a Chancery prisoner—a standing, living monument of how sad a fate it is to fall into the clutches of that terrible 'Court.' White-headed, infirm, and almost if not altogether friendless, this old man had been confined for more than four decades, first in a county debtors' prison and then in the Bench—ever since he was a young man; and for what? No crime against society or any breach of criminal law, but for some non-compliance with an order in Chancery that it was impossible for him to obey. Hard as many of the Chancery cases were, this man Miller's was the very worst. During the period of his imprisonment, nearly half a century, Miller had outlived all his friends and relatives. He had never seen such a thing as a railway nor even an omnibus. When he was a free man, the old stages and hackney-coaches were the public vehicles in general use, and steamboats were looked upon as quite new inventions. His only knowledge of all these things was obtained from books and illustrated papers. The old man had

outlived hope and settled down into a quiet second childhood, contented to have his regular meals, and mechanically to smoke his pipe while listening to tales told him by others of the wonderful new inventions introduced since he had been a prisoner.

Near to Miller lived another old man—a very different one. The unwashed, uncombed, and rarely shaven fat little man, shambling along in an old, unbrushed coat, buttonless and ragged; with his dirty, collarless shirt unbuttoned both at neck and wrists, was what he looked, a feckless, selfish, greedy idler, who enjoyed all he could get, caring little where it came from, who paid for it, or even whether it was ever paid for or not; ever ready to borrow or to sponge upon anyone he could make a victim of; cringing and fawning wherever he saw a chance of borrowing a shilling or getting a dinner. Who would ever imagine that this man had not only been born and bred in affluence, but was the son of a noble house, being a younger son of a peer. His was a wasted life, and it was a sad, sad thing to see to how low a level it is possible for a peer's son to fall.

In one of the top rooms at the Back lived a man whom I will call Mr. Jones. He was another Chancery prisoner —whether a martyr to that dreadful legal ogre or a victim of his own obstinacy, I know not, for let me give a certain person his due and say, at once, that there were several men detained under Chancery orders whose obstinacy alone prevented them from obtaining their liberty. Jones was one of the litigious characters who, like the younger C——, were their own lawyers, attended in court to plead their own cause in person, and make their own motions—having, of course, the pro-

verbial fool for a client. Thin, tall, lantern-jawed, and waspish in appearance, lame in gait, moving along in jerks and jumps like a spasmodic marionette, Jones was a man who associated with no one, and no one seemed to regret his exclusiveness. When walking about he was always talking to himself; and when in his room, the spare moments he had, when not engaged in writing out the necessary papers connected with the various law and Chancery suits he had always in hand, he devoted to disturbing his neighbours by scraping a violin.

The 'Back' also had a smuggling prisoner, an old seafaring man named William Wilson, known generally as 'Smuggler Bill,' who was convicted of 'running' tobacco in his fishing lugger, and fined one hundred pounds. Not being able to pay he had to remain in the Queen's Prison till such time as the Commissioners of Customs considered he had purged his offence. He had already been there eighteen months. How much longer would be reckoned as an equivalent for one hundred pounds, Smuggler Bill was very anxious to know, as he was quite out of his latitude so far away inland, and pined sadly for another sniff of the ever-rolling sea. He was very unlike the *beau ideal* 'Will Watch,' being a tall, gaunt man, with red hair and whiskers, which grew all round his throat like a frill. He wore a pair of pilot trowsers, a thick blue guernsey frock reaching to his hips over the trowsers, the sides of which he hitched up to enable him to get his hands into his pockets, out of which they were seldom seen, except when his short clay pipe required reloading. On his head he wore a most unnautical-looking, tall, old-fashioned beaver hat. His mode of defrauding the re-

venue was to pitch his fishing-ground in the vicinity of Dutch vessels of a similar class, from which he received packages of tobacco; and when opportunity occurred on his return into port, these were landed and forwarded to the parties who employed him, and who ought to have shared his imprisonment. He was often tempted to denounce his employers, and had been offered a price to do so; but though he grumbled sadly at their not paying the fine, he was true to his colours and refused.

Many of the men on the County side, lived very comfortably, and were far better off than those in front, who, though almost destitute, could not overcome their pride sufficiently to make the required declaration and receive the allowance provided for them.

The county allowance of five shillings, with coals and wood, and a supply of furniture, consisting of bedstead, good bedding, chairs, tables, and all needful et ceteras, when supplemented by a little extra, either allowed by friends or resulting from work, enabled its recipient to keep the wolf from his door very well. There were no rules or prohibitions against a man having any extra furniture he liked, or receiving gifts from friends, or earning money at any handicraft or trade.

It was in the front that distress was to be found; for there were more than one whose rooms had so little in them that they slept, if not on the bare boards, on such miserable makeshifts of beds that a decent dog would turn away from them.

Some worked hard and maintained themselves and families; others did not know what work was, never having done any in the outer world. Having no friends

to allow them money, too proud to accept the county allowance, they were driven either to sponge upon others, especially new arrivals, or resort to a precarious means of getting money, either by gambling or racquet-playing. Billiard-tables there were none ; so instead of the cue, these gentlemen had to rely upon their dexterity with the racquet, or their luck at roulette.

Of those who worked, Old Corney was a good specimen. He, like many others, was a Chancery prisoner. An agricultural labourer of the better class, he objected to certain rates being levied on some ground he rented adjoining his cottage in Somersetshire. The parish authorities insisted ; Corney was obstinate. From common law they drifted into Chancery, and Corney got into the Bench, where he had already been some ten or twelve years, and to all appearances would remain as many more. He was the odd and handy man of the place. He cleaned boots, shoes, knives, and windows ; scrubbed floors, brought up clean water and carried away dirty ; lighted fires, and did all sorts of odd jobs for everyone and anyone who would employ him. His clients were mostly those who, unable to afford the expense of a laundress, 'did for themselves.' Corney doing those things that a man who has been used to the decencies of life hardly cares about doing for himself.

Of those who lived by their wits the most notable example was a man named P——. He was one of the notorieties and celebrities of the Bench. One week he and his wife and children would be almost starving, although he was ever an excellent hand at borrowing half-crowns and shillings, or even pence, if the larger sums could not be got. Another week he and they

would be basking in every luxury and living on the very choicest fat of the land—nothing was too good or too expensive. His was a most fertile brain in devising and carrying out the most audacious and impudent schemes, from begging-letter writing to downright swindling. No one scanned the morning papers with greater avidity than Mr. William P—— in search of 'flats and greenhorns' to prey upon. One scheme of his nearly got him into trouble with the police authorities, and showed both the ingenuity of the man and the gullibility of mankind generally. Having obtained the requisite sum to pay for their insertion, he sent advertisements to the morning papers, offering to supply the 'Times' newspaper at half-price, to be posted on the morning of issue before 10 A.M.; three months' subscription to be sent by Post Office order or cheque, in advance, to 'Verax,' or some such name, at the greengrocer's shop, in the near neighbourhood of the Bench, where Mrs. P—— and their olive-branches slept when turned out by the cry of 'Women, children, and visitors all out!' This advertisement was a trump-card to P—— for a little while, and the remittances flowed in wholesale. Fabulous sums were named as being the result of the first week. Of course no 'Times' papers were ever sent to the dupes; and after a while some of them got clamorous, and in one or two instances awkward inquiries were made, that necessitated the P—— family changing their lodgings.

The man himself was tall, thin, cadaverous, baldheaded, colourless, and had a foxy look in his eyes. He had unbounded confidence in himself, mixed up with overweening conceit.

One day, after listening to his recital of the success of one of his quasi-financial schemes, I said to him 'Why, Mr. P——, you are a very Napoleon of finance.'

'What!' was his contemptuous reply. 'Napoleon indeed! Napoleon was an ass. It would take forty Napoleons to make one P——.'

CHAPTER XIV.

THE STONE-PICKING MATCH.

I WAS sitting alone one evening, when my door opened, and in walked Fred Whiffin.

'Well Brett, my boy? I've just fixed up the last arrangement for the match with George K—— to do one hundred stones at a yard apart. P—— backs George for a tenner; G——, Sheridan, and the Major back me for the same. It's to come off to-morrow; and on Thursday the racquet match between the outside men and the insiders is to be played.'

'Who are going to play?' I asked.

'It is not quite settled, but I expect G—— and Martin, or else G—— and Billy Howard. The outsiders are a friend of Handsome Jack's and some man in the Guards. We shall have all the swells here to see it.'

'And who may Handsome Jack be?'

'Don't you know Jack Spalding?' Fred replied, in astonishment. 'Ah, here's Dufour. I say, here's Brett doesn't know Jack Spalding!'

'Then he soon will, for,' said my Mentor, closing the door behind him and taking a seat, 'I have just heard he is coming here on Thursday, with some young friend of his in his old regiment, the Life Guards,

who is going to play racquets. We shall have quite a gala. Half the men in town will be here.'

'Still I am ignorant as to who this man Spalding may be,' I said.

'John or Jack Spalding is now a man past the prime of life, and still very good-looking. In his time he was the handsomest man in the Guards, and was always called Handsome Jack. He is one of the most gentlemanly fellows you ever met, and at one time was all the rage, not only in London, but in Paris and Brussels too. It was reported that the Queen of the Belgians was quite in love with him. Spalding led the fashion in many things; drove the best turn-out in the Park, and was the most envied man in town. He ran through three hundred thousand pounds, and got so hard and fast into debt that his stepfather, Lord Brougham, passed a special Act of Parliament, known as the "Gentleman's" or "Spalding's Act," [10] to enable his dashing stepson to pass through the Insolvent Court without imprisonment. Jack led the way, and several have followed his example, thanking both Spalding and Brougham for the blessing of the new Act. No doubt when he comes, he will bring with him a lot of men of a good stamp.'

'Has he left the service?' I inquired.

'Oh, yes, some years ago. He now leads a quiet life, but is, and always will be, a most popular man. I never heard anyone say a bad word about him. His place in the regiment as its handsomest man, is now filled by the Earl of Mount Charles, eldest son of the Marquis of Conyngham.'

'Is he a handsome man?'

'Very, and a most popular one. Tom Holmes says he is the greatest wonder of the world.'

'In what way?'

'He is the best-looking man in the Household Brigade, no doubt; but Holmes says he is a marvel, possessing so many good qualities. He is an excellent officer, a first-rate soldier, a good and dutiful son, a true friend, an honest man, a loving, virtuous husband, and a good kind father.'

I rose to pull down the window-blind; and, noticing a light in the Receiving Ward, turned to Dufour:

'I see there's a light in the Receiving Ward. Did you notice it as you passed? And do you know who has come in?'

'Yes, I heard all about him, and a pretty sweep he is, if all be true I hear.'

'Who is he?' asked Fred Whiffin.

'I did not quite catch the name, but it is Whyte, Black, Brown, or some colour; but he is an oilman, or something of that sort, in or near Holborn, and has come in all ready cut and dried under a friendly arrest, for the sole purpose of going through the Court to chisel his own father and his father's wife, who is not his mother, but his father's second.'

'He is a beauty without either paint or varnish,' said Fred. 'It seems he has got hold of his father's money and business, and has somewhat played ducks-and-drakes with both. He allows the old man a fair competence to live on; but he is getting old, and cannot live long. The stepmother is younger, and by going through the Court he rids himself of all claim his father's widow will

have on him. And as she has some relations of her own he comes here for ten days or a fortnight, so as to shunt her on to her own family.'

'Maybe his own children will serve him the same,' said I.

'Very likely,' rejoined Dufour. 'Two of his sons—tall young fellows—came to see him to-night. He has set them a good example, and no doubt either they or the daughters, if he have any, will play him a somewhat similar trick, and serve him right.'

'There are some others in the large room who came in early, so Old Newbon told me.'

'Only one, Major N——, an East India Company's officer, and formerly resident at the capital of one of the independent native princes. It is a strict rule that a resident on leaving his station shall invariably return all presents that may have been made to him or his wife and family. This acts as a safeguard against a man's being bribed by the native princes. When he left to come home, he only returned part of the presents he had received; and Mrs. N—— brought away some jewels and valuable shawls. For this he was prosecuted by the Indian Government, and condemned to two years' imprisonment, which, as a first-class misdemeanant, he will undergo here. The worst part of the sentence was his dismissal from the service.'

'What do you say, Brett,' said Whiffin, 'to going up to Capua's room to-night and taking a chance at roulette?'

'Not I. Gambling is not one of my vices.'

'You need not gamble, and it's good fun to look on.'

'Do you always content yourself with looking on?'

'Yes.'

'I expect Mr. Whiffin is rather frightened at the stakes some of those fast fellows play for,' said Dufour with a laugh.

'Well, it is too hot for me,' replied Fred. 'A half-crown one don't mind, but for pieces of gold, is a little beyond me at present, anyhow.'

'A good job too. I should be sorry to play with Captain R——,' rejoined Dufour, with a significant look.

'So should I in an ordinary way,' said Whiffin; 'but I do think old Cap, though he is a Jew, acts fair and square, and works his roulette-board all right enough.'

'Let us hope he does. By the way, Whiffin, your match with K—— comes off to-morrow, does it not?'

'Yes; I shall be glad when it is over.'

'Why?'

'Because, from the very confident way in which the Captain is backing K—— with everyone who will bet with him, I fancy he has some dodge in hand.'

'*Nous verrons*,' replied Dufour, shrugging his shoulders.

'I wonder that the gambling does not get to the ears of the Governor,' I remarked. 'One of these nights there will be a quarrel and a row, and then it will all come out. How is it they always play in Capua's room?'

'Oh, he is very accommodating, and lends some of them money. Leave a Jew alone for knowing how to make money out a lot of young swells such as meet in

his rooms. I expect he finds it almost as profitable as selling oranges and coco-nuts.'

'Is that his trade outside?' I asked.

'Yes, he is a wholesale fruit salesman.'

'What was that affair you and the General were talking about yesterday,' inquired Whiffin, 'about some fellow losing seven thousand pounds here in the Bench?'

'Oh, that was before I came,' said Dufour. 'Latour was telling me all about it. A young fellow who was heir to a large property got in here, and very foolishly played rather freely and recklessly. Some men who were here at the time drew him on; but not winning so fast as they wished, and finding him a good player, it was arranged to introduce a regular blackleg to play with him. The great difficulty was how this sharper was to be here at night, but that was got over by his getting a friendly arrest, and, moving here by *habeas*, he took up his abode in the ordinary way. He was introduced to their card-parties as a newly-arrived stranger; and after a few evenings, what with plying the young fellow with wine and edging him on, one night's play resulted in Mr. Deuceace winning ten thousand pounds of the whole party. The confederates lost three and the poor pigeon seven thousand pounds. They gave him their notes of hand, and so did the victim, for their respective losses. Their notes were only bogus ones. The next day, the game being played out, Mr. Deuceace's discharge came down, and he left the Bench, never more to show his face here. The pigeon's notes were passed to "innocent holders," to use a legal phrase, and before he left these walls he had to settle them all. The others of the gang very soon settled their affairs and left the Bench too.

The affair got wind, and for a time the authorities looked very sharp after all who kept late hours, with a view to stop gambling, but they soon relapsed into the usual easy-going style, and, as you see, anything may be carried on at all hours of the night.'

The next day the stone-picking match came off. Great preparations were made and much excitement ensued. Early in the day the gravel in the Park was swept, watered, and rolled. The ground was measured to a nicety, and two separate courses laid out. A few yards from the State House, and just below Dufour's and G——'s windows, the starting-points were marked, each about ten yards apart. From each point a line was drawn towards the Women's Ward, at the other end of the Park, seventy yards; then each line turned round, and, at a distance of six feet, the line was continued for thirty yards back towards the starting-points. Thus each line—one for K—— and one for Whiffin—formed a long hook, the shank being seventy and the return or hook part thirty yards long. When these courses were clearly defined and marked out to the satisfaction of the judges and umpires, one hundred stones as large as eggs were laid along each course, each stone being a yard apart, thus marking out the whole one hundred yards, with a stone at every yard.

When all was prepared and the hour arrived, the two champions took their places, one at each course. Each man had to take up one stone at a time and carry it to the base or starting-point and there lay it down in a basket before the umpires, who noted every one as it was deposited; then he had to start and fetch another stone, returning with each one to lay it in the basket at

the umpires' feet. The men were at liberty to take any stone off the course they liked; but the whole distance from the base to the place where the stone lay on the ground and back again must be traversed every time. He had to stoop to pick up each stone and again to lay it down in the basket in front of the umpire. No running was allowed; all was to be fair heel-and-toe walking. To pick up one hundred stones, each one yard apart, looked nothing at first. But when it came to be seen that to bring home the stone at the extreme end necessitated a walk of two hundred yards and twice stooping, and the next stone to it required the picker-up to walk one hundred and ninety-eight yards and again to stoop twice, it soon became apparent that, like the proverbial horse-nails, the cumulative increase was so enormous that before the one hundred stones could all be picked up a distance of some miles had to be travelled, and the man would have to stoop two hundred times.

The day being fine, a great many people were out on the Parade and Park to see the match. It was a novelty and a change from racquets. Both K—— and Whiffin were favourites with all who knew them, but there was a little prejudice against K—— in consequence of his being the *protégé* of Captain R——, who was little liked and less respected by nearly everyone, except just the few who toadied him for the sake of such favours as he had to bestow.

Captain Howard and G—— took charge of K——'s ground, one remaining at the starting-point, to see that the depositing of the stones was all correct and fair; the other accompanying him as he walked to and fro picking up the stones and bringing them 'home.' Occasionally

they changed their supervisory work, as the one walking required rest. The like offices for Whiffin were fulfilled by Captain B —— and little Martin.

The word was given, and off the two men started. All went well for some time, when a murmuring was heard among the persons along the side of K——'s course.

Suddenly Howard shouted out, 'Captain R——, if you don't keep further away from your man by G— I'll throw the thing up.

'He passed something to K——,' called out some one in the crowd.

'What the devil do you mean?' exclaimed R——, turning round and looking to see who it was in the crowd that had called out.

'G——,' shouted Howard, 'keep a sharp look-out. There's foul play. How may stones are there in?'

'Ninety-six,' replied G——.

'How many has your man B——?' Howard called.

'Ninety-five,' was the reply, 'and the other five near home.'

This news was received with cheers by Whiffin's supporters, and caused K——'s backers to look blank, as they saw that his outstanding stones were a long way from home.

As has been said, each competitor had the option of commencing his work of picking up anywhere along his line. K—— had at first commenced taking those near home, thus doing the short walks; but Whiffin set off by attacking the far-off ones. This made the play at the outset to appear to go against Whiffin, as of course K—— after the first half-hour had more stones home

than Whiffin; but the latter had really done more work. When, therefore, Whiffin's ninety-five were called out against K——'s ninety-six it was seen that the former was really far ahead.

The excitement was great, and the two crowds eagerly watched the respective courses and proceedings of the two pedestrians.

Much to the surprise of Howard and all around, there was only one stone of K——'s to pick up, and he was in the act of dropping the last but one into the basket, when the Honorable Captain Billy, rushing forward, called out, 'How many stones have you there?'

'One,' was K——'s reply, holding forth his hand, with one in it. Dropping it into the basket at Howard's feet, he turned round to go for the remaining one.

'By heavens R——, you are a —— sweep! Keep away from K——, and don't come near this basket,' said Howard. 'There's a swindle here somewhere, and I'll see it out'

R—— turned as lividly white as the rouge on his cheeks would let him. He looked ghastly.

'D—— you, Capt. Howard, I know how to resent an insult,' replied R——.

'Resent it any way you like. I denounce you as a —— swindler and a blackleg.' Seeing R—— was walking away, he called, 'Here, Martin, Captain B——, and all who have bets on this race, come and count these stones. You will find one at least short.'

K—— had now returned with the last stone, and was about to speak, when Mr. Martin and Dufour stepped forward.

'George, my boy,' said the Irishman, 'just wait till

the stones are counted, and then for the love of heaven I hope ye'll be able to say you're not a party to this blackguard, dirty trick.'

'Gentlemen,' said G——, addressing the crowd that now surrounded the basket and the umpires, 'there are but ninety-eight stones here, and one Mr. K—— has makes ninety-nine.'

'And the one Capt. R—— has will make the lot,' said a man at the outside of the crowd.

'Gentlemen, gentlemen! I swear I know nothing of this,' exclaimed K——. 'I have nothing to do with any foul play.'

'I believe the boy,' said Martin.

A dozen men now began to talk at once. With a few exceptions. R——'s friends held their tongues and looked annoyed and ashamed. He himself had walked off to his own room.

'Oh, there's no mistake about how it was done,' said Howard. 'The —— fellow picked up one of the stones himself when all eyes were on George, and if I had not seen something wrong and called out he would have dropped it into the basket as cleverly as he picked it up.'

'Come along,' I heard Fred Whiffin's voice behind me saying; 'Come along, Brett; I'll go up to your room.'

Seeing his late opponent there talking to some of the bystanders and exculpating himself, he let go of my arm, which he had laid hold of, and going up to him he held out his hand.

'George,' I assure you, old fellow, I don't suspect

you for one moment. I believe the swindle to be entirely his own.'

'Thank you, Fred,' said K——, who felt that those around thought him a confederate with his principal backer. 'I know no more of the thing than you do, and when Captain Howard first shouted out I could not think what was up.'

'There goes the bell,' said Whiffin. 'The tap is open, and the best thing we can do is to smile at each other over the rim of a foaming glass.'

An adjournment to the tap took place, the groups who were discussing the event of the afternoon, and speaking in no complimentary terms of the county member of Parliament's dandified son, dispersed, some to their rooms, and some to the taps, and many surmises were made as to how R—— would try to brazen it out.

CHAPTER XV.

A SUPPER ON CHRISTMAS EVE.

CHRISTMAS is a time of year when, wherever Englishmen are, be they ever so unpleasantly situated, they make some effort to be merry. At this season, even under the most adverse circumstances, the Mark Tapleyism that is more or less inherent in every Briton's disposition, displays itself.

The preparations for passing this festive season in the Bench were almost universal. The residents on the County side had gifts of huge pieces of beef from some charity of a similar nature to those of Whitecross Street already described.

Some two or three quarters of beef were cut up into pieces of about a dozen pounds each and laid out on tables in the room next the Post Office, where the weekly allowances were usually paid. A ticket with a number was placed on each lot, and a corresponding ticket was placed in a box. In rotation, according to the dates of their arrival in the Bench, every man was called, and, placing his hand in the box, he drew forth a ticket. The lot of beef labelled with the corresponding number was then handed to him, and off he walked with the foundation of his Christmas dinner. A money gift of half-a-crown was also given to each one, and on Christmas Day a pint of beer; so that for that day at least

everyone had the materials for festivity. Some had more beef than they knew what to do with, and sold part of it to men in the front. There were many of the front residents who looked with envious eyes on the great pieces of beef as they were carried off by the residents of the Poor side, and who saw but scanty chance of anything but very meagre fare on Christmas Day.

The itinerant vendors of game and poultry made a goodly show of turkeys, geese, and sucking-pigs. Raffles were got up, and among the winners Fred Whiffin was one of the merriest as he came along the Parade one morning, nursing baby fashion a dainty-looking little porker of some 15 lbs. weight, which he bore in triumph to the Kitchen, and, depositing it on the table, told Joe Colwell to 'put forth the very highest resources of his culinary art in its preparation. By the way, Joe,' he added, 'look up your oldest and most mediæval treatise on cooking, and see if you can find out the orthodox way to dress barbecued pig.'

'There's no better way of cooking it than roasting. You leave it to me, and I'll do it all right; but as for barbering it I know nothing about it,' was Joe's reply.

Fred, having already an invitation to dine on Christmas Day with some one else, determined to get up a supper for the evening before, the principal feature of which should be his pig.

The affair was soon arranged. A dozen agreed to attend, each one bringing something to add to the feast, which was to take place in the room of a man named Sudlow.

I contributed a cod's head and shoulders, with which

to grace the opposite end of the table to Fred's prize pig. Dufour, Martin, Wallack, George K——, and Dobson were all there. Corney was engaged to take the part of waiter customarily performed in outside life by the old-established greengrocer.

Eight o'clock was the hour named, and a few minutes before, we were all assembled. Great preparations had been made for the accommodation of so large a party in so small a room. The bed, pressed to do service as buffet and sideboard, was covered with relays of plates—a very harlequin-like set, in which the well-known willow pattern predominated. Bottles, of all sorts, sizes and shapes, filled with what Dick Martin called 'nourishment,' lay side by side comfortably ensconced among the soft pillows. If they had been babies they could not have been more carefully and snugly put to bed. On the table, the mantelshelf, and drawers, indeed on every place available, were either candlesticks or bottles doing duty for the same. Twelve candles in all illumined the room most brilliantly. Holly, ivy, and laurel were festooned about the place. Mr. Sudlow told us that, as no ladies were to be present, he thought mistletoe would be superfluous, if not altogether out of place. He also apologised for the non-attendance on our landing of the usual Bench Band, and hoped we should be content with the distant strains of music. On the floor above us, in one of the C——'s rooms a piano, was being well banged on by some one who, like the drummer described by Dickens in his account of the Eatanswill election, had a powerful hand. At the bottom of the next staircase, the 'Bench Band,' consisting of a harp

and piccolo fife (it attended every night, from five or six till bell-time, Sundays, of course, excepted), was playing outside the room of Captain B——, who was entertaining friends. Situated as Sudlow's room was, midway between the two, we just heard enough of the music discoursed by both to say with Macheath—

> How happy could *we* be with either,
> Were t'other dear charmer away!

Little ceremony was used or needed in the introduction of guests to each other; and as soon as Corney and one of the servants from the Kitchen had arrived with the pig and the fish, and Martin had turned out the contents of two saucepans that were on the fire, one of which contained a cow-heel, and the other a goodly supply of what he called 'murphies in full dress'—*i.e.*, potatoes boiled in their skins—we all took our places.

Whiffin sat at the head of the table, and Mr. Sudlow, the tenant of the room, at the other end.

'Silence, gentlemen, for grace,' said he, standing up. 'For the blessings of little pigs and big cod-fish, to say nothing of oysters and cow-heels, let us all be very thankful to a beneficent Providence who provides such luxuries for us poor insolvent debtors. Now, gentlemen,' he continued, resuming his seat, 'we see our prison fare before us. Let us for a while forget there are such dreadful creatures as creditors, and do our best to pass a jolly Christmas Eve. I am sorry, gentlemen, our two footmen and the page are absent this evening; but our good friend Corney will act as butler; and if he will only do that as well as he cleans windows we shall be all right.'

We set to work and did justice to all on the table. The codfish vanished—a very few moments after sitting down nothing but its bony framework remained, lying on one side of the dish like, as I have since seen, the ghastly remains of the once gallant ship wrecked upon the rocks, her gaunt, weatherworn ribs still standing for a while, till the next winter's storm shall tear them in fragments and strew them on the shore.

The attack on the pig was gallantly led by Martin, who divided his praises between the 'little beauty of a pig' itself and Joe Colwell for dressing it and cooking it like an artist.

For some time no sounds were heard except the clatter of knives, forks, and plates; but the most voracious appetites have a limit, and by the time the pig became as perfect a wreck as the cod, our hunger was appeased.

The empty plates and dishes were handed to Corney, to whom the little that was left of the pig was given, and he stowed them all away under the bed. The kettle of water he had placed on the fire was already singing, when, collecting the scraps and remains of the feast, and wishing us all good-night, he took his departure with a smiling face, in anticipation of his own supper.

Cans, bottles, jugs, and glasses were brought forth from cupboards and pockets. The stock of beer and wine that had been so snugly laid on the bed had already disappeared, and the liquors now produced were of a nature not sanctioned by the rules of Captain Hudson's establishment. Martin produced from his pocket a couple of lemons, and after preparing two or three glasses by half-filling them from a private bottle

of his own, he turned his head towards the fire, and, seeing the steam issuing from the kettle-spout, jumped up.

'Och! Faugh a ballagh!' said he, 'or I'll scald ye. The water's mighty hot, as it should be. I'll help myself and pass the kettle.'

Every man had his special brew before him. Pipes were lighted up, and the conversation became general. All sorts of topics were discussed.

'Who was your big friend this morning, Martin?' asked Whiffin. 'There's no need to ask if he's an Irishman; and Lawson named him the "Ballymulligan" at once.'

'Is it Charley B—— ye mean?' said Martin. 'He that was with me at the tap?'

'Yes; the gentleman in the rough coat, with the big stick, the curly whiskers, and splendid large eyes. B——! I thought his name would have been O'Shaughnessy, or O'Donoghue, or some other O.'

'Charley B——, my boy, will one day be Sir Charles B——; he is next heir to the baronetcy; but it's a poor empty title, for devil of a shilling comes to him with it.'

'He must look out for a rich wife; there are plenty of people ready to barter beauty and money for the title of "My lady."'

'Charley was once on the brink of matrimony, and only turned back at the church-door.'

'Tell us all about it, Martin,' said Dufour. 'I have heard one or two good things of him before.'

'Some friends of B——'s were very anxious he should marry, and introduced him to a lady with

plenty of money but no great amount of beauty. Now, Charley is a somewhat critical admirer of the fair sex, and prides himself upon his good taste. Having remarkably small, well-shaped hands and feet himself, he admires the same when he sees them in others, and particularly in women. Unfortunately, the lady in question did not have a particularly small or elegant hand, and it was a sore point with Charley. No doubt some one of her friends informed her of his fastidious tastes in these respects, for she took great care to keep her feet invisible. The love was all on one side, and that was the lady's, whose friends, anxious to make sure of my friend and his prospective title, hurried on the preparations for the wedding with all possible haste compatible with decency. At length the day arrived—the day the would-be bride had looked forward to so anxiously. Charley and his best man were at the church-door, and the bridal party expected every moment. At last the carriage drove up. The lady, confident of the realisation of her hopes, and feeling already that she was Lady B——, relaxed her usual caution in her movements, when Charley, going forward to hand her from the carriage, she smilingly gave him her hand, and at the same time protruded from beneath the skirt of her white satin dress the very largest and broadest white satin shoe my fastidious friend had ever seen. He stared aghast—let go her hand as if it burnt him, and exclaiming, in a tone of horror, "Och, no! begorra, not that foot!" rushed off at full speed, and was soon out of sight. Where he went to no one knew; and it was not till six months afterwards, when Count Figg met him walking on the ramparts at

Calais, that his friends were quite sure he had not gone off and committed suicide.'

The story of the 'Ballymulligan's' ignominious flight from the lady with the large foot was received with laughter by 'all hands.'

'Is Count Figg, as you call him, the man who was here last week—the swell fellow with the dyed hair and whiskers?' asked Whiffin. 'I thought his name was Winkworth.'

'So it is,' said Dufour. 'He was christened Count Figg by George the Fourth when Prince Regent. W—— is the son of a wholesale grocer, who made a large fortune in the Borough, and left him and his brother about 100,000*l.* each. They both cut a dash with their money; but our friend—who, by the way, has not bad taste—did the thing much better than his brother. He got a commission in the Buckinghamshire Yeomanry, and looked a great swell in the gorgeous hussar uniform. He is not a bad-looking fellow now, as you can see, and when a young man was very passable. Having got his Yeomanry commission the next thing was to get 'presented.' The prince, noticing our fine-looking friend, asked some one, as he was walking away, who he was, saying he had all the air of a foreign nobleman. On being told he was the son of a rich grocer His Royal Highness laughed, and declaring that such a man ought to have a title, he christened him "Count Figg." The name has stuck to him ever since, and among his intimate friends not only is he so called to his face, but even his wife is alluded to as either the "Countess" or "Mrs. Count Figg."'

'Dufour, did you ever hear the tale of Mrs. Figg and the opera-ticket?'

'No. Let us have it, Martin.'

'The Figgs used to be very intimate with Charley. He and W—— are the sort of men to go well together; for Figg, having run through the fortune left by the old grocer, is always up to some scheme to make money; and B——, never having had any at any time, is always open, by lending his name to figure as director of a company or some like way that a gentleman can adopt, to do the same. Money is the staff of life, and somehow it must be got—in the most respectable way possible. Figg knows a good many discount fellows, and can always get a young swell's bills readily melted, and so pick up a good deal in the course of the year. He also has (or, what is much the same, he fancies he has) a taste for pictures, and is always picking up Raphaels and Correggios at brokers' shops and at sales. These, having bought for shillings, he puts in for pounds, as part of the proceeds of their bills, to some of the swells he does business for. He does the same with wine; and when a bit of paper is melted to the tune of a couple of hundred, the man, if he objects to "old masters," has to take 40*l.* or 50*l.* in some peculiar and renowned brand of wine, either port of the "Comet" year or madeira that has made as many voyages round the world as Captain Cook. B —— used to introduce fellows, in want of ready money, to W——; and, as we all here know, one has not far to look in London for gentlemen of that sort. The only question was, were they good enough for Figg's discounting friends? How-

ever, this is not telling you about Charley B—— and the Opera-tickets.

'Charley, as I have told you before, though so rough-looking and so big a fellow, is a man of great taste for all that is good in art. Music he is devoted to, and when times were good with him and the W—— family they would go together to the Opera. When Jenny Lind came, tickets were tickets; and if you wanted a place in the theatre she was singing at, you had to apply a month or so before. B—— and the W——s, like other folks, determined to go; and the two gentlemen walked down together, and after elbowing their way into the box-office, succeeded in purchasing three seats for that day fortnight. Nothing more was thought of it till the morning of the day, when Charley called early at W——'s house, in Maida Vale, to see what arrangements were to be made for going and returning.

'"Oh, dear, Mr. B——!' said the lady, "did not Mr. Winkworth tell you we had sold our tickets?"

'"Sold your tickets! What in the name of heaven is that for?" rejoined the astonished Charley.

'"Why, I thought he was sure to have told you. We saw by the papers that, the *furore* being so great to hear Mademoiselle Lind, the price of the tickets had gone up tremendously; and as I called at the box-office and found we could sell our seats for to-night at a profit of 2*l.* 10*s.*, we sold them, and quite expected you had done so too."

'"What do ye think of that, my boy?" said Charley when he told me of it. "The horrid commercial ——! The whole town was going mad to hear the Swedish

Nightingale. Every woman in town was raving about her, and scheming all manner of ways to raise the wind to get there. Many would have sold almost the very shift off their backs; and she in cold blood makes a profit of her seats and sells the tickets! Oh, begorra! did anyone ever hear the likes of her? Dick, my boy, I didn't feel safe in the room with the woman. I turned face about and walked off, and devil a look have I had at her since."'

'Well, I must say, it showed a rather sordid disposition,' said one of the gentlemen present, 'to have so turned the tickets to a profit, and not what many would have done.'

'One has only to keep eyes and ears open in this very Bench, and the lessons one may learn,' said Dufour, 'will be of the greatest service. In exemplification of what Mr. Parke was saying on the subject of pawning and borrowing money in ordinary financial circles, see how ashamed men are here when they have to send things to raise money on at a pawnbroker's. Poverty is no crime, though deuced inconvenient. But look at the contrast in the case of that Mr. M—— who came in last week. He was a great financier. Bankers and bill-brokers ran after him asking him to hypothecate his goods—as Mr. Parke properly calls it—with them. So well has he done it, that the question is, if he has not hypothecated some goods twice over. He actually has a slang of his own, and calls certain sums of money by pet names—"ladles," "tablespoons," "teaspoons," and other queer and quaint terms. He has smashed, and brought ruin on all around him; and here the very officials treat him with

respect, and everyone regards him as if he were more than mortal or a little king at least. It is only the question of amount between his dealings with the great Quaker bankers and others in the City and the little transactions at various pawnbrokers, or with poor Mrs. P—— when she goes to take that great financier's best suit on which to raise a few shillings.'

'Hark! What's that? Listen,' said Whiffin, and instantly everyone was attentive to catch the sound, expecting it might be the night-watch coming round.

It was a church clock striking the midnight hour. The window was opened, and then in the still night the various church clocks were heard. Twelve was struck. It was, then, Christmas Day!

Each man gathered up his glasses or bottles and put them in his pocket. We wished each other a merry Christmas and good night, and then quietly dispersed, each to his own room—all doubtless thinking more or less of those at home or elsewhere beyond the high, spike-topped walls of the Queen's Bench.

CHAPTER XVI.

'THE RULES OF THE BENCH.'

In former years, previous to *my* residence at 'No. 1 Belvedere Place,' certain privileges were granted to debtors, which allowed them to reside either in the Bench or outside the walls. A triangular district, forming part of the Borough of Southwark, the northern base or boundary of which was the river Thames, reaching from London Bridge to Blackfriars Bridge, and extending as far south as the bottom of the London Road and the tollgate facing the Elephant and Castle, was called the 'Rules of the Bench.' This district was bounded on the east by the middle of the roadways of the Borough High Street, Blackman Street, Stones End, and Newington Causeway; and on the west by the Blackfriars Road and the London Road.[11]

Within this district, on the debtor giving satisfactory bail that he would not go beyond the prescribed limits, he was permitted to reside how and where he pleased, and might carry on his business or profession. Numbers of debtors availed themselves of so desirable a privilege. Nelson Square, leading off the east side of the Blackfriars Road, was originally built entirely for the accommodation of the families of *respectable*, well-to-do debtors, who, though under arrest probably for

large amounts, continued to live in good style and comfort.

In addition to this, if any of these 'Rulers' wished to go beyond the prescribed limits, they could do so by paying for a 'day rule,' accompanied or not by a tip-staff, according to *arrangement*, which was easily effected by a liberal supply of what is known in the East as 'backsheesh.'

It used to be said that the rules of the Bench were very *elastic*; many parties who were supposed to be confined to the strict boundaries being frequently met by their friends at Bath, Tunbridge Wells, and other fashionable watering-places; and indeed tradition says that in the case of one very eminent debtor, they stretched sufficiently to allow him to go to Calcutta.

The Surrey Theatre, being situated on the west side of the Blackfriars Road, was just outside the boundary; and it was a customary thing for sheriffs' officers to scan attentively the faces of the audience in search of any Rulers who might be tempted to visit it, and on finding them to levy black-mail; or, failing being *tipped*, to arrest them for other debts and take them either to their own sponging-houses or to Horsemonger Lane Prison. While within the limits of the Rules of the Bench itself, no fresh arrest had any power, though, of course, a writ could be served upon a debtor.

Shortly after his return from America the late Mr. Charles Mathews commenced his too celebrated series of financial difficulties—brought on, so report said, by the extravagance, not so much of himself, as of Madame Vestris, to whom, just previous to his trip to the United States, he had been married.

His arrests were so frequent, they have become historical; and during one of these inconvenient detentions, which promised to last much longer than the customary few days, an engagement was offered to this incomparable pair of artistes, by Mr. Davidge, the then lessee of the Surrey Theatre, to play there. To leave the prison and reside in the Rules was a matter arranged as a matter of course; but, the theatre being a few yards beyond the boundary, presented a difficulty which was only surmounted by Mr. Davidge and the late Mr. Cross, the proprietor of the Surrey Zoological Gardens, giving extra bail, to enable Mathews to have a "day rule" every night; and to make matters quite sure, both for the sake of his bail and his creditors generally, a tipstaff was stationed at each wing behind the scenes, in whose custody he was supposed to be. Mr. Charles Mathews, *répertoire* did not then embrace Mr. Affable Hawke, in the 'Game of Speculation.' What a zest to the acting of this part would have been the figure at each wing of a rubicund-faced tipstaff! I can imagine George Husted's good-humoured face beside the prompter's box, and the glance the actor would cast towards the wing on asking the very pertinent question, 'What are creditors for, if not to give credit?'

Several amusing stories are told of people who have resided within the Rules of the Bench, and one I cannot resist recounting.

The law pays no respect to sex, and if a fair lady have no husband she must bear the consequences of her debts on her own shoulders. A certain dashing and very fair widow, of more than usual powers of fascination, having tired out the patience of her creditors

—consisting, I presume, of milliners, dressmakers, silkmercers, and jewellers—was sued, arrested, and, after being taken to a sponging-house, moved by *habeas corpus*.

Being of a gay and sociable disposition, she soon found the prison itself far too circumscribed, and pined for parties, routs, and balls. She obtained liberty to reside within the Rules; and, taking a house in Nelson Square, speedily became the leader of the fashion, in that not over-fashionable quarter. She visited everywhere within the rules, and entertained liberally in return. Her Thursday evenings were the most delightful *soirées* on the Surrey side of the Thames. For not only did a little dancing and music, and a good deal of whist, *piquet*, or *vingt-et-un*, serve as an attraction for the residents within the Rules, but the fame of the very pleasant parties at No. 99 Nelson Square, and of the grace and beauty of the fair hostess, soon spread to more fashionable quarters. Introductions and invitations were eagerly sought after. In the course of time her admirers formed quite a little regiment. Some came to pass away an hour in flirtation with the fair widow; while others, more seriously smitten with her charms, having lost their hearts, were anxious for an opportunity to declare their love. With those who were thus enslaved, all thought that the fair lady was a compulsory resident within the Rules of the Bench vanished. Several did not even know it, and cared not to inquire. They had been introduced by friends. They came—they saw—they did not conquer, but were conquered. One gentleman, into whose bosom the urchin Cupid had driven his

shaft deeper than the others, pressed his suit with such assiduity and success that the fair one, with blushes on her cheek, consented once more to enter the holy state. In due course they were married. From church the happy pair returned to Nelson Square, and, after the usual wedding-breakfast, prepared to leave by post-chaise for Brighton, to spend their honeymoon. The tipstaves of the prison, who had heard of the wedding, now thought the game had gone far enough, and just as the bride was about to step into the yellow-bodied postchaise, the four horses attached to which were impatient to dash off, one of them stepped up, saying, 'Mrs. A——, if you attempt to leave the Rules I shall arrest you and take you to the Bench.'

'I am no longer Mrs. A——,' replied the lady; 'I am now Mrs. B——, and there is my husband, who is, as you know very well, responsible for any debts of mine.'

'Then, sir,' said the tipstaff to the trembling and confused bridegroom—upon whom there began to dawn a fearful vision of debt, trouble, difficulties, and all sorts of horrors—'I shall arrest you.'

'Not quite so fast, if you please, my good man,' exclaimed the new bride, who had evidently well posted herself up in the law of debtors. 'It is time enough to arrest my husband when you have sued out a writ against him. If you have a writ, produce it; if not, be good enough to stand on one side and let my husband get in.'

The officers saw they were done, and could not themselves help laughing at the wit of the quondam widow.

'Now, my dear,' said she, turning to her spouse, 'step in, and we will be off.'

Mr. B—— required no second invitation, but jumped in. Off drove the chaise-and-four; and the creditors had to commence proceedings *de novo* against the new husband of their fair debtor.

CHAPTER XVII.

MRS. WALLACK'S CHRISTMAS PUDDING.

CHRISTMAS DAY, in spite of every effort to make it a pleasant time, passed but heavily with most of the Benchers. No amount of feasting and forced hilarity could prevent the thoughts recurring to other scenes, when the great festival had been passed under brighter circumstances than in a prison, for after all, even with its many advantages, the Bench was but a prison. I, however, had every reason to feel light-hearted on that day, for by the morning's post I had received a letter from the solicitors who were winding up the affairs of old Mr. Harrison to say that my matters were in a fair way of settlement, and very shortly I should be put in possession of my little property, as the impediments that prevented my being so before were in a great measure, overcome.

Bright visions of my next Christmas in a Southern and more sunny clime rose up before me; and it was with a light heart that I called in at Wallack's room to see how Mrs. Wallack was progressing with her preparations for the feast, for they and Dufour were to dine in my room, and she had taken the management of matters into her own hands.

The all-important and indispensable pudding had been prepared by her at home, and had been boiled

there too. It was only to be put into the pot again, just to make it hot, and a great saucepan had been on my fire from an early hour, so as to have the water all ready boiling by the time Mrs. Wallack should arrive with it. Her husband had been down at the gate, ready to meet her and carry the parcels she would bring, long before it was possible for her to arrive. Joe Colwell had special orders about the goose, with strict injunctions as to browning it without burning it. A great discussion had taken place as to what our dinner was to consist of. Beef was rejected unanimously at starting; and the question lay between goose and turkey. Our little dinner passed off very well; everything was satisfactory, Mrs. Wallack's pudding was pronounced excellent, and no one complained of its not being boiled enough. Much to her husband's surprise, the little lady produced a phial of brandy, with which to set the pudding on fire. He was dreadfully alarmed at the risk she had run in smuggling it in, but she only laughed at his fears, and said she was determined her pudding should not be spoiled for want of the brandy, while she had wit enough to bring it in under the very noses of the turnkeys. He wanted to know how she secreted it, but his clever little wife only laughed, and refused to tell any of us how she managed it. As evening approached there was every indication of a fog.

'How very provoking!' said Wallack as he pulled aside the curtain and looked on to the Parade. 'It's getting quite foggy. You will have to leave quite early and go home. Indeed, you had better go at once, my dear, before the fog gets worse.'

'Indeed I shall do no such thing,' was the little

woman's reply, with a laugh. I am very glad it has come on foggy, for I have quite made up my mind to stay here all night.'

'What! all night!' exclaimed her husband. 'Impossible. Where?'

'Why, where should I stay but with my husband? I came to the resolution long ago that if you were here on Christmas Day, I would be here too. It's bad enough to separate man and wife at all, but on Christmas Day it's barbarous, and I don't mean to be separated from you to-night; so make your mind easy, my dear husband, and don't fear about me.'

'They will miss you at the gate if you don't go out,' said Wallack. 'What do you think, Dufour?'

'Well, I hardly suppose they count all the ladies who come in or go out,' was his reply; 'and I dare say if Mrs. Wallack keeps very quiet, the turnkeys are not likely to commence paying you nocturnal visits on Christmas night, for the first time. I only wonder some of you ladies don't stop frequently, especially on wet nights.'

'Oh, depend upon it I shall keep as quiet as a mouse, but out of this Bench I don't go to-night,' was the merry reply of the little wife.

We passed a pleasant evening; and as soon as the bell rang and the turnkey came round, calling as usual 'Strangers, women, and children all out!' Mrs. Wallack went off to her room and locked herself in. Wallack, Dufour, and I went down and walked up and down the Park, watching the little knots of visitors hurrying away to the gate. A noisy, laughing bevy of women came from the rooms of Sheridan and the C——'s and made

their way towards the gate, where tall Dennis stood sentinel. There was little need to ask any of them to raise their veils—they were at no pains to hide their fair faces; and, wishing both Dennis and old Newbon a good night, they tripped gaily out.

They were the last to depart, and as the last flounce disappeared, Dennis closed the gate and, after locking it, turned off the gas, and the prison was closed. The night-watchman commenced his duties, which consisted chiefly in keeping up the fire, in the lodge of No. 16 staircase and chatting with such of the Benchers as passed through.

We continued our walk up and down the Park. Wallack was silent, and very nervous as to any chance of its being discovered that his wife had not left the prison.

'You need not fear,' said Dufour, who knew well how anxious our companion was. 'It's not quiet folks like us that the officials look sharp after. They take but very little notice of such ladies as Mrs. Wallack or Mrs. Dobson, but I'll be bound they knew exactly how many visitors both S—— and C—— had, and a good many more of a similar sort, and probably counted them both in and out. If one of those soiled doves had remained behind, I expect not only would John Colwell or Dennis have missed her, but have made a very shrewd guess to which room to go to unearth her.'

'You don't think there's any chance of their missing my wife and coming to look for her?' said Wallack.

'Not a bit of it,' was the reply; only let her keep quiet in the morning, and not show herself till near

midday, and no one but ourselves will have the leas suspicion she has ever slept in the Queen's Bench.'

'You were going to tell me some tale about how Tom Yatley got his wife,' I asked Dufour.

'Ah, yes, I remember I did. You know, of course, what a character the old usurer bears both here and at Whitecross Street, and I have little doubt of its being well-merited. So much has come out in matters connected with men whom he has arrested, that we may readily give credence to anything bad of him.'

'Have you ever seen him?'

'No, but I hear he is an ugly, ill-looking little beggar—a sort of combined Quilp and Quasimodo, but minus the hunch.'

'He certainly is no beauty; but his wife, I hear, is a very fine woman. She was the daughter of a man who got into difficulties and also into Master Tommy's clutches. Like a good many more of his victims, he came here, and was for some months in Warren's room, on No. 12 staircase. In one of his transactions he had done something that slightly overstepped the narrow line dividing what is strictly legal and what is not—I will not say between honesty and fraud, as they are divided by a different line altogether. However, whatever it was, old Tommy got hold of it, and used it as a whip over his shoulders. One day, when Yatley called, he met the daughter, and then and there conceived a passion for her. Some say his first designs were not what are usually termed honourable, but goodness knows he is black enough without anything not strictly true being laid to his charge. The lady, as may be naturally supposed, was far from flattered by the attentions and proposals of her ugly little admirer. He,

however, had made up his mind to have her for his wife, and with very little delicacy—which, by the way, is a quality almost entirely deficient in his character—he gave the father and daughter the choice of two things—either that she should consent to become Mrs. Yatley or that he should stand his trial at the Old Bailey, for what he plainly told them was a felony. There was no mincing matters with Tommy. Either love or revenge he was determined to satisfy; and it was for the pigeon in his clutches and his daughter to decide. Like the Roman daughter of old, the lady sacrificed herself to save her father, and became the wife of perhaps the best-hated money-lender the present century has yet produced.'

'I suppose,' said I, 'he let his father-in-law out of the Bench?'

'I believe so. What became of the old man I cannot tell you, but this I do know, that the little Shylock never lost an opportunity of throwing the father's supposed breach of the law into his wife's teeth; and even at his own dinner-table has spoken to his guests of his wife's father as the old rogue who, but for his forbearance, would have been transported.'

'Why are such men permitted to exist?' I asked.

'Ah, why indeed? Well, it is proverbial that even the devil has some good points, and Tom Yatley has his. They say he is devotedly fond of his children, and to them is all a good and indulgent father can possibly be.'

'Well, Wallack,' I said, 'I think we may consider matters safe for this night. What say you, gentlemen, to our turning in?'

We all departed to our several rooms, and so ended Christmas Day in Her Majesty's prison.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE GREAT RACQUET MATCH.

THE day appointed for the playing off the racquet matches, between two pairs of Gentlemen Benchers against a like number of outsiders, opened fine and propitious in every way. A shower in the night had well-prepared the ground for rolling, and there was no lack of volunteers to drag the heavy roller backward and forward over the gravel. The fact that three outside 'swells'—one of whom was in the Guards and another a lance-corporal in the Blues—were coming to play against the crack players of the Bench, had been made known, not only at many of the Clubs, but had formed the material for an item in the 'Coming Events' column of 'Bell's Life.' Long before the time arranged, strangers who were evidently not frequent visitors began to arrive. Those who were acquainted with men whose present address was '1 Belvedere Place,' went up to their friends rooms, others sauntered about looking around them with the air of sightseers visiting the Tower or Westminster Abbey, and asking questions of those whose appearance left but little doubt as to their being residents.

Every window facing the court to be used had two or three heads leaning out, and the rows of chairs brought out and placed either under the State House

wall or on the Parade, commanding a good view, gave the place the appearance of 'Lord's' ground on a match-day.

The players selected to represent the Benchers were Martin, the Honourable Captain H——, Dick S——, and a man named Prodgers, who generally acted as racquet-master and ground-keeper, and who when outside was a professional player, frequenting mostly the White Bear Racquet Court, in the Kennington Road. He was a slight man, of medium height, as lithe as an eel and nimble as a panther. Known as 'Young Joe' and the 'Professor,' he seemed to be on very free-and-easy terms with most of the swells, but had about him that unmistakable, slangy look that all such professors have.

The man brought from outside to pit against him was the corporal in the Blues, a head and shoulders taller than the 'Professor;' and though, when not playing, he had the stiff, measured gait appertaining to all men who have received a military training, he proved himself quite as agile as his antagonist, and was evidently a practised player.

The 'get up' of the three gentlemen players from outside was the perfection of dandyism as applied to *costume gymnastique*—white flannel trowsers, coloured silk tight-fitting shirts, and fancy caps. One wore a Turkish fez, and on making his appearance was instantly christened (?) 'Mehemet Ali' and 'Pasha of Egypt.'

Preliminaries were soon arranged, and the first game commenced between Captain H—— and the 'Professor' against the tall corporal and a young fellow

of some eight-and-twenty or thirty years, whose easy and graceful bearing, handsome features, bright eyes, and silky whiskers made him envied by many of his brother officers.

By the time the play commenced the crowd of lookers-on was considerable; and as very many evidently well-known men were strangers to me I appealed to my usual Mentor to enlighten me as to who they were.

'The tall, fair man in the frock-coat seated by the side of Latour is Spalding, "Handsome Jack."'

'And well he deserves his *sobriquet*,' I said, for seldom had I seen a better-looking man.

'A good story is told of him and Lord Brougham, his stepfather. When Jack was a younger man he was quite the rage in the *beau monde* and as great a favourite as he is now. One day Lord Brougham said to him, "Jack, I hear it said you're the handsomest man in London." "I'm afraid, my lord, you will never hear the same said of yourself," was the reply.'

Another 'Jack,' also a well-known man, but the very antithesis of Spalding, came up to us.

'"Hullo, Johnson, how are you?" exclaimed Dufour, holding out his hand.

'Oh, stunning, old boy—three feeds a day and beans,' was the characteristic reply of Jack Johnson.

'Here's Brett asking who the little fellow with buttoned-up coat and red flower is.'

'He should have asked his friend young Wallack,' replied Johnson, 'who must know him well. His name is John H——, and he's in the Stock Exchange; but is

better known as "Geranium Johnny." See, there are Albert Smith and Forrester ("Alfred Crowquill") with him. Johnny has a snug little bachelor's crib at Stockwell, where he gives stunning parties to artists and literary men, whom he rather patronises. He's a conceited little chap, and had his portrait drawn on stone by Baugniet. He gave copies away to every man or woman he knew, and the carvers and gilders made quite a living out of framing his ugly phiz. One day he was walking with another "three-quarters seven-eighths" man down the Strand, and on getting opposite to Salteri's the framemaker, next to Exeter Hall, he dragged his friend across the road, expecting to see one of his precious portraits, framed and glazed, standing in the window. Sure enough there he was, hat and stick in hand, and looking at it were three girls. "Who's that ugly little brute?" said one. "Lor, don't you know? Why, it's Geranium Johnny." The next day it was all over the Stock Exchange, and the name has stuck to him ever since. Those fellows have plenty of chaff among themselves; and one day when H—— was giving away some of his portraits various opinions were passed as to the work, the drawing, the position, and such like. At last one fellow said the position was bad, and the artist would have made a better picture if he had taken him in an attitude of prayer. "Of prayer!" exclaimed Johnny. "How so?" "Why, in the position you say your first prayer in church—with your face in your hat." Depend upon it that man was not asked to the next bachelors' *soirée* at Stockwell.'

'Ah, there's Figg,' said Dufour, as he returned the nod of recognition from a couple of men who had just

pushed their way to the front; 'and Carstairs is with him.'

'Yes,' said Jack Johnson. 'W—— and Carstairs hunt in couples just now. The Count manages to get hold of some good bills, and the swell tailor of Conduit Street contrives to melt them for him.

'Who are those three men on the left talking with Martin?' I asked. 'Surely that must be Colonel Sibthorp; he's just like the pictures of him in "Punch."'

'Oh dear, no,' replied Dufour, 'that's not Sibthorp, but he's quite as original a character. Corfield was a Captain in the 7—th, and is now in the Charter House. The Duke of Wellington gave him a presentation to one of the Brotherhoods a little while ago. The man on his right is Horace Clagget, who married Miss Day—Day & Martin, you know—and the other Sir Wyndham Anstruther, both great friends of Corfield's.

'Who's this person coming?' I asked.

'Not know Harry Boleno, the clown? I am ashamed of you,' said Johnson. 'I thought everyone knew him.'

'And standing beside him is General H——, who says he is our lawful Sovereign Lord, and King.' And Dufour pointed out a tall man, fully, if not over, six feet high, with a particularly small head and red hair.

'Yes,' said Jack, 'that is George Plantagenet Strabolgie H——, the lineal descendant of John of Gaunt, and, according to his own statement, the real, right, and lawful King of England.'

'Does he make any claim to the throne?' I asked.

'Not he. He's wise enough to be satisfied with saying who he claims to be and sealing his letters with the

Royal arms. He saw some service as a free-lance in Bolivia and one or two other South American States, where he was made a general.'

I had been too much interested in listening to my two companions' description of the onlookers to regard the play much, though I could not but observe and admire the wonderful agility of the corporal and the Professor. The play was mostly between them; but when the young Guardsman did get an opportunity he seldom missed it, and it was a treat to see the grace that accompanied his every movement.

The corporal was always cool and collected, and it struck me that he would be a difficult customer to tackle with either broadsword or lance on horseback. His extreme coolness gave his play a peculiar contrast to that of the Professor. It seemed as if he never moved till the ball actually fell into his court, but when it did fall he was there with one spring to give it due attention. His panther-like opponent was never one moment quiet. He bounded from one side to the other backwards and forwards in his court as if ever on the look-out for the ball, and very frequently caught it on his racquet before it could fall, and sent it flying back to the wall, to rebound just where his adversaries were least expecting it. This is called 'volleying,' and, though more showy, is not so good play, to my idea, as the quieter style of the corporal.

'Well, Jack, what do you think of the game?' asked Dufour.

'Oh, I back the Insolvents,' was his reply; and his judgment was verified by the ringing cheer of the bystanders, as Captain H——, running in, caught the

ball just as it was falling near the wall, and, gently lifting it with his racquet, caused it to touch the wall a few inches above the bar and fall into his opponent's court before the dashing Guardsman could get there to save the game.

The other players now entered upon the scene, and their game commenced. It was a better-contested rubber than the first, and, greatly to the satisfaction of the Benchers, resulted in victory for those who Jack Johnson had so disrespectfully termed the Insolvents.

CHAPTER XIX.

A SUCCESSFUL AND RESPECTABLE SWINDLE.

THERE are certain periods of the year which the lawyers call 'Term Time,' and others they name 'Vacation.' When term time comes round and the Law Courts open, very many of the defences to actions for debt, that had been merely made for the purpose of gaining time, collapsed; and judgment ensuing, as a matter of course the consequence was a large amount of active service among the sheriff's officers and the arrival of their victims at the several debtors' prisons.

At one period of my residence in the Bench the number of inhabitants was so great as to give cause to fear that 'chumming' would be resorted to, and in a few instances at the 'Back,' or County side, some of the rooms had two occupants. When this billeting of two men in one room occurred it was called 'chumming;' and it needed but little consideration to understand that the little rooms, though very comfortable for a single occupant, were not at all so for more, and particularly when they were strangers to each other, and possibly both married men, with families, who visited them perhaps daily. The words sung by the late Paul Bedford in the burlesque of 'Norma' are very applicable in such a case:

> A single pigeon set upon the fire to stew
> Is just enough for one, but not enough for two.'

Many were the inconveniences that those who were chummed together had to put up with, and many an amusing *contretemps* resulted therefrom.

When one of the tenants of a room was desirous of having the apartment to himself, on the occasion of a visit from his wife or other friend with whom he wished to have private conversation, and so wanted to give a gentle hint to his chum or *confrère* that his absence would be agreeable, his room more welcome for the time being than his society, the customary *Masonic* sign was to stick a fork into either the wooden mantelshelf or the table, on seeing which, without a word being spoken, the one who was *de trop* would, as the Yankees say, 'vamose' and take himself off to some other person's room; or, failing having an accommodating friend, to the Park, there to take a long constitutional walk or otherwise amuse himself.

Having been making a call on an acquaintance who lived at the Back, to return a book he had lent me, I met a man that I had known at Whitecross coming out of one of the rooms on the same staircase. He was a livery stable keeper, named Rogers, and had been in the Ludgate Ward.

'My chum has just stuck up his fork, and I must mizzle,' said he, with a broad grin. 'His missus has come, and I reckon they don't want me.'

'When did you arrive?' I asked.

'The night before last; and they've chummed me on to the chap in there, very considerably to his disgust and of his better half too.'

'Who is he?'

'His name is Meredith; he was a bookseller, and

stationer, and is always talking about the lot of money he has made and lost in railway shares.'

We had reached the bottom of the stairs; and noticing that Rogers had evidently nowhere to go to while he made himself agreeable to Mr. and Mrs. Meredith by keeping out of the room, and the weather being anything but tempting for pacing up and down the Park, I asked him to come up to my room and smoke a pipe.

He needed no second invitation.

'Most happy, sir,' said he; and we both started to run from the door of the staircase we had descended, to that of No. 16, so as to get out of the drizzling rain as speedily as possible.

On reaching the top landing there were Dufour and Wallack quietly sauntering up and down the passage.

'Oh, there you are at last!' said my Mentor. 'We were just giving you up, and Wallack was about to stick a note on your door to tell you to find us in his place. I have come to take up my abode with you for the rest of the day, for Mrs. Clarke and Corney have turned me out of house and home to have a regular clean down and whitewash the ceiling.'

'All right. Here's another one turned out of his room too, and I've asked him to come and spend an hour in mine. Mr. Rogers was at the "Cross" with me, and is one of the new arrivals who are chummed at the Back.'

'My mate has given me a hint to clear out. "Two's company, and three are not,' said Rogers. 'A nod's as good as a wink to a blind horse; and so when I see the three-pronged fork ornamenting the chimneypiece in a

perpendicular attitude I cleared out at once, and, very lucky for me, met Mr. Brett on the stairs, for I don't know too many people here yet a while.'

We were soon seated in my room, with a good fire made up. It being one of those cold, foggy, drizzling days that make foreigners anathematise the climate of the British isles, none of the ladies of the Wallack or Robson families had ventured out, so we determined to make a bachelors' party of it in their absence. Robson and Whiffin were not long before they joined us; and as soon as the bell rang announcing the opening of the taps, Whiffin put up the signal in my window that the beer boys were wanted, and on one making his appearance gave instructions to the youth to 'go on fetching beer till further orders.'

When we had all settled comfortably down Mr. Dufour turned to Rogers and asked, 'Who are you chummed on?'

'A man named Meredith.'

'Then I suppose you have heard all about the N—— of S—— Railway, in which he lost nearly all the money he had made in other shares?'

'He's d——g the N—— of S—— from morning to night, and it's a good job for that part of the world his curses are of no effect. I don't understand much about these shares and scrips and things, but he do seem to have dropped upon a lot of poor things in the shape of investments for his money,' observed Rogers.

'The fact is,' said Whiffin, 'Meredith, like a good many others, thought it a very nice game as long as it was profit and no loss; but so soon as it became a case

of stand from under and keep clear of the falling bricks, as when Aladdin's palace fell to pieces, it was devil take the hindmost, and he seems to have been one quite in the rear.'

'What he growls at most,' remarked Rogers, 'is, that he could have made a lot of money out of these very N—— of S—— things, only he thought they was balloons and would never stop going up.'

'No, and they did not till the bubble burst,' said Dufour; 'and of all the bubbles of that confounded Railway mania, the N—— of S—— was the very greatest; and what is more, it was so cleverly managed that quite a halo of respectability pervaded the whole affair, and by those who could not see any further than their noses and believed all that was told them, the very men who profited by the affair were regarded as the most magnanimous of directors—almost martyrs to an excess of honesty.'

'If you can tell all about it,' said Wallack, 'I should be glad to hear, as all that I know is the fact that the shares came out at a premium, as everything else did, and afterwards suddenly dropped to a discount.'

'Well, I do know a little of the affair,' rejoined Dufour, with a smile, 'for I not only made a little money out of the first rise, but the very man, old John S——, who managed the rigging the shares on the Stock Exchange market to the price they got to, was an intimate friend of my own broker, and in my visits to his office I picked up a good deal about it, as S—— was in and out all day. Like a good many more of the companies got up, it was all done offhand, with but very little real preparation or investigation; in fact, in this

case no thorough survey was ever made. The ingenious concoctors of the scheme took a map of Spain, and first of all drawing a pencil line straight from Madrid to the western end of the Pyrenees, on the Bay of Biscay, then looked to see what towns it passed near; and altering the line here and there, so as to make it touch those points, the railway was considered as "laid out." Perceiving that there was already a canal in Spain—the Castile Canal—it suggested itself to the promoters that this might be utilised, and accordingly it was lugged into the affair and a special point made of it in the prospectus. This being printed, and a small second-floor office in Old Broad Street taken, a few advertisements were put in the "Times" with the names of a provisional directorate, and the promoters' work was so far done. As the public rushed forward and wrote for shares in everything, so did they for allotments of scrip in this company. John S—— was introduced into it, the market was worked, and in a few hours Royal N—— of S—— shares were quoted on the Stock Exchange and in all the lists of prices in the papers. Instead of allotting all the shares to the public at par, only a very few were given, and most of those few to friends of the promoters and their connexions. What one cannot get one always values greatly. The public, thinking the scarcity of the shares was only a proof of their extraordinary worth, bought in the market at a premium what the directors would not allot to them at par, and in such a head-over-heels sort of fashion that the price in a very few days ran up to 10*l.* and 12*l.* premium, at which figures the clever promoters and directors sold all the shares. I believe they did enter into a correspond-

ence with some parties in Madrid about getting a concession from the Government to be allowed to make the line. When the shares were sold at these high prices the par value—which was 2*l.* 10*s.* a share—was placed to the capital account of the company, and the amount of premiums—ranging through all sorts of figures, from 1*l.* to 12*l.*—the promoters and directors put on one side for their own private benefit. This must have amounted to a very large sum indeed. Now the second act of the drama commenced, and in it appeared the most eminent man in the railway world. Whoever it was that concocted the whole affair was undoubtedly a clever man, and knew how to do the thing royally and well.

'When the scheme came to be seriously considered it was soon seen that such a line as chalked out on the rough-and-ready plan adopted by the unscrupulous originator could not be carried out. The Railway Mania showed signs of having reached its climax, and now the thing to be done was to effect a clever and decent retreat, and at the same time retain the whole or greater part of the plunder. A plan was hit upon which for boldness could not be excelled. An able merchant—one of the merchants of Liverpool, I think—went to Spain, took with him no less a man than the great "Father of Railways," George Stephenson, for the purpose of having his opinion on the line. To the dictum of such a man no one would then dare to demur. He was at the very zenith of his well-merited fame. He was already retained to visit Belgium and France, to view some of the projected lines there, or rather to see the country and give the engineers the benefit of his ideas and the sanction of his indisputable opinion. Terms

were made for him to extend his journey to Spain, and a fee of one thousand guineas with all his expenses was given him. Stephenson and Sir Joshua went, and the result was just what might have been expected. The great engineer at once pronounced such a line an absurdity and impossible of construction, except at enormous loss; and as for the canal, its traffic would not reach one-eighth of what was estimated.

'The Royal N—— of S—— Railway directors considerably toned down old George's report and issued an announcement to the public to the effect that, the eminent gentleman employed by the company having reported that the engineering difficulties of the line were insurmountable, it was determined to abandon the scheme; and further, that the promoters and directors, to whom this decision of Mr. Stephenson was a bitter disappointment, would not ask any of the shareholders to bear any of the expenses, but would defray the whole of them themselves and return to the shareholders the the whole of their deposit-money without any deduction whatever. That is to say, they handed back the 2*l.* 10*s.* per share deposit, which was all *the company* had received. No one could *legally* complain. All that the shareholders could look to the company for were their deposits, and, compared with most other schemes, lucky they were to get those. If people pay premiums and fancy prices for shares or any other "good thing" they have only themselves to blame if they find they have paid too dear for their whistle.'

'Well, now, that was clever, if it was nothing else,' was Fred Whiffin's remark. 'I wonder they did not pay the people five per cent. interest on their 2*l.* 10*s.* a share.'

'I will not be sure,' replied Dufour, 'but I think I heard of such having been proposed; but some one suggested that perhaps interest might be thought just a little too strong. The exceedingly liberal way in which the promoters and directors bore the whole of the expenses on their own shoulders, and returned the shareholders their deposit-money in full, rendered it pre-eminently respectable, and left nothing for slander to cavil at.'

'I suppose, then, my chum, Mr. Meredith, didn't get his money back, like the others, as he lost such a lot?' was Rogers' observation.

'Oh dear, yes,' said Dufour, who as a member of the Stock Exchange knew thoroughly all the ins-and-outs of such business, 'he got his 2*l.* 10*s.* a share back; but I expect he bought his at the high premium, so that they would have cost him 12*l.* or 15*l.* each; and as the company only gave back 2*l.* 10*s.* his loss would, of course, be very great; and I don't wonder at his using very unparliamentary language when speaking of the N—— of S—— Railway.'

CHAPTER XX.

LIBERTY AND NEW SOUTH WALES.

ONE day—one fearfully wet, gloomy day, when not a soul was out on the Parade, and everyone had the blue devils—I was sitting chewing the cud of thought. I had dined alone, and the *débris* of the feast was still on the table. A knock came to the door. 'Come in.'

A half-drenched urchin, about fourteen, stepped in, and, after asking if I was Mr. Brett, handed me a note, which, by the seal, I saw was from my solicitors. To tear it open took but a moment; and then before my eyes were the following words—words more welcome and containing more real poetry to my mind, at that moment, than whole volumes of Tennyson, Byron, Wordsworth, or Scott:—

'*Re* Brett's Estate.
'*Re* Harrison's Clients.

'Bedford Row.

'A. BRETT, ESQ.—Dear Sir,—We have the pleasure to inform you that we have this day received an order on the Accountant-General from the Court of Chancery to pay over to us the proceeds of your share in the late Thomas Brett's estate. Our chief clerk will wait upon you in the morning to take your instructions

as to settling with Messrs. Happs & Camp. In the meantime will you inform us by the bearer if there are any other debts that are likely to detain you?

'We are, dear Sir,

'Yours most obediently,

'BIDBOROUGH & FAIRFAX.'

'Here, boy, sit down and eat what you can find on the table while I write.'

The lad required no second bidding. He cleared off all there was; and meanwhile I wrote as follows:—

'Queen's Bench.

'"GENTLEMEN,—Your letter gives me much pleasure. The only thing to do with Happs & Camp is to pay them—please do so at once. I do not owe one shilling besides. I shall await your clerk's appearance to-morrow with impatience.

'Yours very truly,

'AUG. BRETT.

'*To Messrs. Bidborough & Fairfax, Bedford Row.*'

The next morning the clerk came with papers without end for me to read and sign. The money for Happs could not be paid till the morrow, that precious gentleman being out of town; and the bill—poor Charles Watson's bill—was in his safe, and my solicitors would not pay unless it were handed over.

Swearing was of no use, so I bore it like a martyr. But those last four-and-twenty hours were like a month to me.

The next day, by eleven o'clock, the clerk came again,

and asked me to walk with him to the gate. There, in the lodge, was John Colwell, who bid me follow him into the Governor's office. There I was formally discharged, and told I was a free man. It was necessary before returning to my room that I should assert my freedom and leave the precincts of the prison. I did so, asking a couple of disengaged turnkeys and the solicitor's clerk to accompany me. We walked over to the Britannia, where I stood treat all round.

To bid a hurried good-bye to Dufour and several men whose friendship I had formed, to settle up with Husted and Mrs. Clarke, and pack my traps, took me a couple of hours. That afternoon I drove up to my old quarters at the 'Tavistock,' that I had left nearly eight months before.

Six weeks after I went on board the good ship 'Vimiera' at Gravesend, bound for Sydney. Little did anyone know, the day that vessel left the river Thames, that on her return to England she would bring home news of the verification of Count Strezlecki's prognostication of the Australian rocks being auriferous, and that Britain's great Southern colony teemed with gold.

A week before my arrival at Sydney the news had come down that, away on the banks of the river Murray, near Bathurst, on the western side of the Great Blue Mountain range, gold—bright, shining gold—had been discovered by Hargreaves, and was to be got for the digging as easily as in California. I escaped being bitten with the Gold Mania. I had come out to the colony with a settled purpose, and had already a squatting-station in view away in Darling Downs; and I argued to myself, if gold is in the country it may just

as well be north as west. Therefore as soon as I could I started and made the best of my way, stopping only for a week to visit an old friend and college chum at Sedgenhoe, near Aberdeen, on the Hunter River.

The old Bench is done away with; and imprisonment for debt become obsolete. When I think on these things, my mind is carried back to old days, now many years ago, and I think I hear those Cripplegate chimes, or fancy that, in the evening twilight, the 'Coo-ey, coo-ey, coo-ey, coo-ey,' as it is shouted across the valley I am now living in by an approaching traveller, shapes itself into—

'Stran-gers, wom-en, chil-dren—all—out!'

APPENDIX.

NOTE 1, *Preface.*

By the Act 32 & 33 Victoria cap. 62 imprisonment for debt was abolished, except in certain cases; but in such cases the duration of imprisonment is not to exceed one year. This Act does not affect committals under the County Court Acts, which are for contempt of Court. The non-compliance with the Judge's order to pay the money adjudged to be due constitutes the principal and general form of contempt.

NOTE 2, *Preface and page* 27.

Under the County Court Acts 9 & 10 Victoria cap. 95, and 19 & 20 Victoria cap. 108, it is provided that, on a debtor failing to comply with the order of the Judge to pay certain instalments of the debt, the non-compliance is held to constitute a contempt of Court, for which the Judge shall have the power of committing the debtor to prison for any period not exceeding forty days.

NOTE 3, *page* 7.

A Ca. Sa., or writ of *capias ad satisfaciendum*, to arrest a debtor's person, is in the following form:—'Victoria, by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Queen Defender of the Faith. To the Sheriff

of —— greeting: We command you that you take C—— D——, if he may be found in your bailiwick, and him safely keep, so that you may have his body before us at Westminster immediately after the execution thereof, to satisfy A.B., as well as a certain debt of £——, which the said A.B. lately in our Court at Westminster recovered against him, as also £—— which were adjudged to the said A.B. in our said Court for his damages which he sustained, as well as on occasion of the detaining of the said debt as for his costs and charges by him about his suit in that behalf expended. Whereas the said C.D. is convicted, as appears to us of record, together with interest upon the said sum of £—— at the rate of £4 per centum per annum from the —— day of —— A.D. ——, on which day the judgment aforesaid was entered up, and have there then this writ. Witness ——, at Westminster, on the —— day of ——, in the year of our Lord ——:

'_____.'

A Fi. Fa., or writ of *fieri facias*, is for the seizure of the debtor's goods and chattels, and is in form very similar to that of a Ca. Sa.

NOTE 4, *pages* 13, 95.

The writ of *ne exeat Regno* is a prerogative writ, which is issued to prevent a person from leaving the realm, even though his usual residence is in foreign parts or he is a foreign subject. Originally it was only used for great political purposes; but is now applied where an actual debt is owing, which must be certain, pecuniary in its character, actually payable and not contingent. It is a writ only granted with great caution, upon affidavit being filed, and is to hold the defendant or debtor to bail, upon giving which he is at once liberated.

NOTE 5, *pages* 20, 72.

'In the White Crosse Street King Henry V. built one fair House and founded there a brotherhood of St. Giles; but the said brotherhood was suppressed by Henry VIII. Since which time Sir John Gresham, Mayor, purchased the lands, and gave part thereof to the maintenance of a free school which he had founded at Holt, a Market Town in Norfolk.' —STOW, p. 113.

'Whitecross Street Prison—a prison appertaining to the Sheriffs of London and Middlesex for the detention of debtors —was built in 1813–1815, from designs of William Montague, Clerk of the City Works.'—P. CUNNINGHAM.

This being the case, the pictures in the County Court Ward alluded to in page 76, as being attributed to the hand of George Morland, could not possibly have been his work, as Morland died in 1804, at the age of forty-one.

Between the period of the last night in Whitecross described in the text and the abolition of imprisonment for debt, very great changes took place in the internal arrangements and management of that place. In consequence of the scenes of riot that used to occur, and more particularly the fire described in these pages, very great restrictions were placed upon the supply of beer and all intoxicants; and the admission of friends and visitors into the wards was abolished. The lower part of the chapel was converted into a large room, in which the *détenus* were allowed to see their friends.

Whitecross has within the last few years been demolished, and the site where once stood this grim City Debtors' Prison is now occupied by the new City goods depôt of the Midland Railway Company.

NOTE 6, *page* 82.

'Nell Gwynne's Bounty' was a bequest of Mistress Eleanor Gwynne, the mistress of King Charles II., made in her will, to her natural son, the Duke of St. Albans, 'that his Grace would be pleased to lay out 20*l.* yearly for the releasing of poor debtors out of prison every Christmas Day.

It was part of this fund that was devoted to the purchase of bread, as described in the text.

NOTE 7, *pages* 94, 111.

A writ of *habeas corpus cum causa*—to do and receive—is addressed to the Sheriff, and commands him to have the body of the debtor detained in his custody brought before one of the Justices at his Chambers in Rolls Gardens, Chancery Lane. This writ is exchanged before the Judge by the tipstaff who receives the body of the debtor from the officer of the Sheriff for a writ of *habeas corpus ad respondendum*, addressed to the Keeper of the Queen's Prison—or Bench—commanding him to have the body of the debtor detained in 'our prison under your custody as it is said; under safe and secure conduct.'

NOTE 8, *page* 112.

This prison dates from a very early period, and is one of the oldest in London. Henry Prince of Wales, afterwards King Henry V., was committed by Judge Gascoyne to the King's Bench Prison, in Southwark, for striking him on the Bench.

By the Act 5 & 6 William IV. cap. 22 the King's Bench, the Fleet, and the Marshalsea Prisons were all amalgamated and constituted 'as a prison for debtors and for persons con-

fined under the sentence or charged with contempt of His Majesty's Court of King's Bench.' By this Act the public coffee-room and tavern inside the prison, alluded to in the text, and called the 'Brace Public House,' was abolished.

Richard Baxter was imprisoned in the King's Bench Prison for his paraphrase of the New Testament.

The old Bench still stands; but has twice, if not oftener, been applied to other purposes than that for which it was constructed. So extensive and valuable a site of ground will hardly be allowed to remain idle, and it may not be long before some metropolitan improvement will cause the removal of this long celebrated palace of a prison.

NOTE 9, *pages* 160, 194.

A writ of *habeas corpus ad satisfaciendum* is addressed to the Keeper of the Queen's Prison, commanding him to bring up the body of the debtor or prisoner to the Court required, and after he shall have given his evidence, been examined by the Judge, or transacted whatever business he may have before the Court, to conduct him back to the Queen's Prison.

NOTE 10, *page* 222.

SPALDING'S ACT.

The Acts for the Rules of Insolvent Debtors were as follows:—

1 & 2	Victoria	cap.	110 secs. 23-120.
5 & 6	„	„	122.
7 & 8	„	„	70.
7 & 8	„	„	96.
8 & 9	„	„	127.
10 & 11	„	„	102.

All of which were repealed by the Bankruptcy Act of 1861, 24 & 25 Victoria, cap. 134, sec. 230 and following. Insolvent debtors are now all amenable to the Bankruptcy Laws. The 7 & 8 Victoria cap. 70, entitled, 'An Act for facilitating arrangements between debtors and creditors,' August 6, 1844, is the Act introduced by Lord Brougham to facilitate his stepson's relieving himself from his very extensive liabilities, and is usually known, in consequence, as 'Spalding's Act.' It was only applicable to the relief of non-traders.

This Act is fully set forth in 'Lord Brougham's Acts and Bills,' by Sir J. E. Eardley-Wilmot, Bart., pp. 561 to 565. (Longman, 1857.)

NOTE 11, *page* 245.

THE RULES OF THE BENCH.

Defoe, in his 'Journey through England,' vol. ii., page 3, 8vo, 1722, says: 'The King's Bench is in Southwark; its rules are more extensive than those of the Fleet, having all St. George's Fields to walk in; but the prison house is not near so good. By a *habeas corpus* you may remove yourself from one prison to the other, and some of those gentlemen that are in for vast sums, and probably for life, choose the one for their summer, the other for their winter habitation; and indeed both are but the show and name of prisons.'

In May 1653, Whitelock states, 'there were 399 prisoners in the Rules of the King's Bench, whose debts amounted to 900,000*l.*'

'BEVIL: But by your leave, Raines, though marriage be a prison, yet you may make the Rules as large as those of the King's Bench, that extend to the East Indies.'—SHADWELL, *Epsom Wells*, 4to.

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